

Colonising Space and Producing Territory: John and  
Elizabeth Simcoe and Water, Power, and Empire in Upper  
Canada, 1791-1796

by

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines how John Graves Simcoe, the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, and his wife, Elizabeth, manifested imperial expressions of power, sovereignty, security, and population within the new colony in the 1790s. There are also three chapters that focus on how territorial and route surveying played a critical role for both Simcoes, serving as a scientific foundation for reframing Upper Canada as a territory and a population. It does so by offering a re-examination of both their well-known private and public correspondence written in this decade, and also some select paintings and maps through which their ideas of governance and political and cultural visions were expressed. The dissertation's reading and contextualisation of this archive is informed by Michel Foucault's lectures on governmentality, critical cartographic histories, and imperial and colonial historiographies, all of which are brought into conversation with historical studies of Upper Canada.

There are two central arguments in this dissertation. First, it demonstrates the ways that the actions of both Simcoes were imperial in nature and were not directed towards the establishment of an independent Province. Towards this end, it reconsiders Elizabeth's collection of writings as evidence of the ways that she embodied and administered imperial interpretations of power and knowledge as a faithful observer and cataloguer of the colony through scientific methods including cartography. Second, this dissertation argues that the Simcoes' work in and about Upper Canada were expressions of an early modern imperial governmentality that predated and thus operated somewhat

differently from the historiographically well-known liberal governmentality that emerged in Canada in the early-to-middle decades of the nineteenth century.

## **Acknowledgements**

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father, Dr. Jack Warren Murphy (1939-2000). He was my first teacher: he taught me how to learn and how to love learning; he taught me that PhD stood for “Piled higher and Deeper.” He was one of the most intelligent and well-read people I have encountered in my life, and yet he remained also one of the most curious and humble of men in the presence of new ideas. Some of my favourite memories of him are of his genuine love of watching his children learn and his unmitigated pleasure in having us teach him things he did not know—or perhaps things that he rediscovered through our eyes. His belief in me and my abilities continues to inspire, humble, and challenge me. Even now, each time I encounter a new idea or a concept that excites or intrigues me, my first impulse is still to share it with him.

Thank you to the readers and examiners of my dissertation: Dr. Jeffers Lennox of Wesleyan University, Dr. Jennifer Henderson, Dr. Dominique Marshall, and Dr. James Opp of Carleton University for their engagement with, challenges to, contextualisation of, and gracious insights on this project. I am thankful for Dr. John Walsh and his enthusiasm for my topic through its evolutions throughout my studies, and especially his patience working across the distance between Ottawa and Washington State. I cannot imagine this project without his support and guidance and for helping me to see that it was possible that I had something to say about Upper Canada. My doctoral studies were funded in part by Carleton University and I appreciate the means it provided me in pursuit of this degree.

I have deep gratitude for my grandparents, Ware and Betty King, whose generosity enabled me to attend university and who gave me courage to apply for academia in the first place.

There are too many people to mention who have invested in me their support, their encouragement, and their belief in me. Sara Belk was influential in encouraging me to find my voice and confidence. I would not have ended up in the discipline of History had it not been for Robynne Rogers Healey; I am grateful for her advice, her collaboration, her example, and her friendship throughout my academic journey. These supporters also include my family, near and far, especially Rachel, Jamin and Havilah, Jono and Melissa, Katrina (whose editing advice could not have come at a better time), Jemimah and Shannon; they are friends like Laura, Sylvia, Val, Cal, Don and Janet. They are my colleagues and customers at Starbucks; they are friends in Ottawa, British Columbia, Washington State, and around the world who have shown me care in this effort in ways large and small: thank you.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

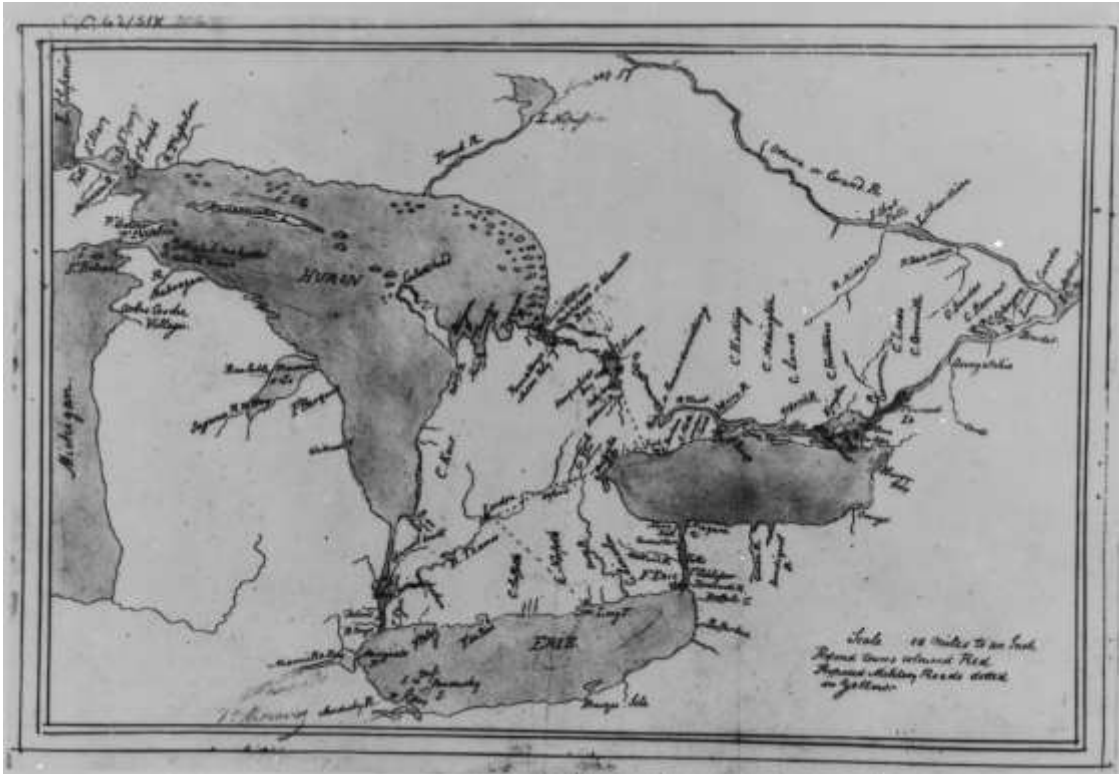


Figure 1: Elizabeth P. Simcoe, "Sketch" of Upper Canada," (1793).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth P. Simcoe, *Sketch of Upper Canada*, Cartographic Material, 1 inch to 50 miles (Canada, 1793), R12567-123-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.



From her lodging in Québec City on 15 March 1792, Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim Simcoe (1756-1850) wrote the following letter to the caretaker of her children at her Wolford estate near Devon, England:

Another mail arrived and no letter from you, my dear friend Mrs. Hunt. How is it that you I esteem so wise, should not have had observation enough to have found out by the news papers [*sic*] that Packets go to N. York & Halifax every month & are immediately forwarded from thence here? Do you not remember Lake Champlain & Lake George & all that route from N. York to Québec which you have so often drawn & which is passed constantly & in a rapid manner when the lakes are frozen? This Town is now supplied with fresh Cod in a frozen state from Boston distant 700 miles & it is sold at 6d per lb. So you have proof that we are not excluded from communication with the rest of the World, or destitute of Luxuries. We have had some excellent Venison from the township of Matilda above Cataraqui. I daresay you remember that name on the Map above 400 miles from hence. I find our Maps to be little better than Sketches, little of the country being surveyed. The Surveyors draw slowly & I am told when they want to suit their map to the Paper do not scruple cutting off a few miles of a River or adding to it.<sup>2</sup>

This letter is part of one captured and published in Elizabeth's "diary" that she created during her stay in Upper Canada with her husband John Graves Simcoe (1752-1806). They had arrived in Upper Canada in November of 1791 and until they returned to England in the fall of 1796 neither of them was far from the shores of the St. Lawrence River. This excerpt is not an unusual piece of writing from Elizabeth on a variety of subjects. It demonstrates her interest in the various waterways of the eastern North American continent. Exemplified here and throughout her diary, she demonstrated a keen knowledge of and, more importantly, an interest in a deeper knowledge of the geography

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<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Simcoe, *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*, ed. Mary Quayle Innis (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 2007), 82.

of Upper Canada. She considered herself intimately connected with her friend through an imperial network of communication and understanding. She was informed of the costs and structures of the place where she was currently staying. Finally, it is clear here and throughout her diary that she adjudicated observed behaviours and situations, like those of the surveyors, and actively assessed and compared them to those with which she was familiar.

Elizabeth and her husband John responded in similar ways to the geographical spaces of Upper Canada, and as such they belonged to an Atlantic and transnational imperial structure and network and framework of knowledge. Married in 1782, by 1789 John and Elizabeth had relocated to Devon, England. Writing from their Wolford Estate that year, John sent a copy of his memoirs to Evan Nepean (1752-1822), the Under Secretary of State, detailing his experience with the Queen's Rangers in New York and Philadelphia during the war with the colonies,<sup>3</sup> and enclosed this supplication:

Should Canada act upon the wise, enlarged, and just plan of annihilating at once every vestige of Military Government in her native Colonies, and undermining by degrees the miserable feudal system of old Canada... I should be happy to consecrate myself to the Service of Great Britain in that Country in preference to any situation of whatever emolument or dignity. The minds of thinking men are anxiously turned towards America, —mine naturally must be so from the part I bore in the War, and from believing my Father<sup>4</sup> to have been the principal

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<sup>3</sup> John Graves Simcoe, *A Journal of the Operations of the Queen's Rangers: From the End of the Year 1777, to the Conclusion of the Late American War* (England: Exeter, 1789).

<sup>4</sup> John Simcoe's father, also named John Simcoe, was born in 1710. He was James Cook's fourth naval captain and spent time on the mouth of the St. Lawrence River near Québec. On this journey he participated in the survey of the river and harbour alongside Samuel Holland and General James Wolfe. He died of pneumonia off the coast of Louisburg on 6 May 1759. Jerry Lockett, *Captain James Cook in Atlantic Canada: The Adventurer & Map Maker's Formative Years* (Halifax: Formac Publishers, 2011), 51–53; Richard Hough, *Captain James Cook: A Biography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), 20.

means of the Attack on Québec having taken place.<sup>5</sup>

Nepean's career in the British civil service stretched from positions with the Royal Navy in Australia to the West Indies and ended with an auspicious parliamentary position.<sup>6</sup> In this letter, one of many that John Simcoe wrote in pursuit of the position of Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, his own professional and personal position within the Empire and its networks of power affected how he interpreted Upper Canada's potential as well as his own. His letter to Nepean demonstrates his understanding of the ways that these connections to Empire directly implicated his suitability for the position he desired, and throughout this dissertation I refer to the sentiments that John expressed in it to illustrate his ideas and ambitions towards the colony.

British imperial efforts in North America, both after the conquest of Québec in 1759 and especially following their loss of the thirteen southern colonies by 1783, were focussed specifically on consolidating imperial space on the continent: this was not a state-building venture that was intended to lead to the present and autonomous Canadian state. Rather, these were acts meant to build, grow, and continue to uphold the Empire. Agents of the empire in Upper Canada during this time sought to incorporate loyalists who had fled from the conflict to the south; indeed, they eagerly welcomed them and actively abetted their settlement. However, in shaping the nature and future of Upper

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<sup>5</sup> A note regarding my citation formatting for diaries and for correspondence: I have included the date of the entry or the date on the correspondence at the beginning of the citation, followed by the citation itself when I did not include the date in the text itself: 3 December 1789, Brigadier General E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada*, Vol. 1; 1789–1793 (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), 6.

<sup>6</sup> R. G. Thorne, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol. 4 (London: Secker and Warburg, 1986), 654.

Canada, these Loyalists held a position that was necessarily that of imperial subject. As important as British North America was to the Empire, its importance was firmly and inescapably that of a colony. There was only one kind of idea of loyalty that the Empire courted; this meant that only one kind of sovereignty was or would be recognised and that efforts to expand the knowledge of the geography of the Province and deepen the power structure in Upper Canada was only acknowledged through that imperial lens.<sup>7</sup>

For Simcoe and other “thinking men” within the British Empire in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, their efforts were in part directed towards accurate mapping, surveying, and knowing colonial territories. This production of a kind of geographical knowledge was integral to their desire to project power, sovereignty, or authority over space. These efforts were directed towards the purpose of what Michel Foucault defines as “rules of right,” that is sovereignty or governance. Through these claims their goal was to project authority. They assumed that geographical knowledge communicated through accurate or “true” maps translated into expressions of power.<sup>8</sup>

This dissertation considers how imperial security priorities were reflected in John Simcoe’s plans for the construction of canals in Upper Canada. The manifestations of these desires would eventually be the Welland (1824-1829), Rideau (1832), and Trent-Severn (1833-1918) canal building projects. Canals in British North America as they were in other places in the world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not only

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<sup>7</sup> David Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty in Upper Canada, 1784-1850*, (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, 1st American Edition (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 90.

fuelled by economic and commercial considerations but were also an expression of the desire to govern both territory and population. As we shall see, Simcoe's vision for canals were part of broader geo-political desires, anxieties, and ways of knowing. Furthermore, the geographic realities of the North American continent complicated and created a reciprocal relationship between how both John and Elizabeth Simcoe, the two key historical actors in this study, came to understand the manipulation of waterways in Upper Canada and the need for such work to be done.

To understand John Simcoe's vision for canals, this project examines the ways that his voluminous correspondence featured a consistent, deliberate focus on the potential inherent in the waterways of Upper Canada for security, transportation, and for creating and governing population. This focus never wavered throughout the correspondence that he penned even before he arrived to take up the position as Lieutenant Governor in Upper Canada.<sup>9</sup> In addition, this dissertation examines the ways that Elizabeth's writings were also heavily water-centric. She echoed John in this respect and, at times, amplified and expanded on this central place of water in her writing, and also in her sketches, maps, and watercolours.

John and Elizabeth Simcoe's position in Canada's historiography often falls into the category of "pre-Confederation" Canadian history, but too often in a teleological sense that looks back at this period from what happened later. As Jane Errington insightfully argues in the preface to the second edition of her book, *The Lion, the Eagle*,

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<sup>9</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Evan Nepean, Wolford Lodge, 3 December 1789, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1: 1789–1793, 8; J. P. D. Dunbabin, "Motives for Mapping the Great Lakes: Upper Canada, 1782-1827," *Michigan Historical Review* 31:1 (Spring 2005), 1-43; 2.

and Upper Canada, there is much work still to be done to locate this time and space both within a larger Atlantic World and also to reinsert and make more visible the centrality of its imperial past. “It is now impossible to write about life in Upper Canada,” she contends, “without considering, and often foregrounding, how colonial understandings of class, race, ethnicity, and gender, informed actions, attitudes and beliefs.”<sup>10</sup> She expands

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<sup>10</sup> E. Jane Errington, “Some Reflections: Introduction to the Second Edition,” in *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology*, 2nd Edition (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), xx; see also; ); Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Jerry Bannister, “Atlantic Canada in an Atlantic World? Northeastern North America in the Long 18th century,” *Acadiensis* 43, no. 2 (2014): 3–30; Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, eds., *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Jerry Bannister, *The Rule of the Admirals: Law, Custom, and Naval Government in Newfoundland, 1699-1832* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Amy Turner Bushnell and Jack P. Greene, “Peripheries, Centers, and the Construction of Early Modern American Empires,” in *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, eds. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1–14; Alison Games, “Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities,” *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 741–57; Allan Greer, *Property and Dispossession: Natives, Empires and Land in Early Modern North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Theodore Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Theodore Binnema, “Enlightened Zeal”: *The Hudson’s Bay Company and Scientific Networks, 1670-1870* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2014); Daniel W. Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999); Jack P. Greene, “Transatlantic Colonization and the Redefinition of Empire in the Early Modern Era: The British-American Experience,” in *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, eds. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2002), 267–87; Allan Greer, “National, Transnational, and Hypernational Historiographies: New France Meets Early American History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 4 (November 1, 2010): 695–724; Stephen Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire: Samuel Holland, J.W.F. Des Barres, and the Making of the Atlantic Neptune* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011); Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid, *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons* (Montréal; Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005); Stephen J. Hornsby and Michael J. Hermann, *British Atlantic, American Frontier: Spaces of Power in Early Modern British America*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005); Jeffers Lennox, “An Empire on Paper: The Founding of Halifax and Conceptions of Imperial Space, 1744–55,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 88, no. 3 (2007): 373–412; Jeffers Lennox, *Homelands and Empires - Indigenous Spaces, Imperial Fictions, and Competition for Territory in Northeastern North America, 1690-1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); Jeffrey L. McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791-1854* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2000); John G. Reid and Emerson W. Baker, *Essays on Northeastern North America, Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2016); John G. Reid, *The “Conquest” of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial, and Aboriginal Constructions* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill; Williamsburg, Va.: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

that this is important because “although Upper Canada was not “on” the Atlantic, it was part of an Atlantic world, and two generations of colonial leaders were intimately tied to currents of ideas, assumptions, and identities that travelled between and among Great Britain, the United States, and the interior of North America.”<sup>11</sup> My research seeks also to include the importance and centrality of these kinds of understandings of governance and scientific mastery of space for the transatlantic British Empire. The permanence of the Empire, both around the world and specifically in North America, was unquestioned when John and Elizabeth Simcoe arrived in Upper Canada in 1791. Therefore, the Simcoes’ actions and plans that continued to affect exploration, surveying, mapping, engineering, and governance in Upper Canada well into the next century should not be contextualised as precursors to a Canadian national identity or state; they were imperial in scope, assumption and nature, and therefore belong instead to the early-modern era’s globalised histories of geographical knowledge and Empire-making.

This dissertation is also inspired by Bruce Curtis’ work on expressions of governmentality in nineteenth-century Canada, even as the dissertation’s focus changed over the course of my research. In the *Politics of Population*, and in several related essays where he also expands specifically on education both in Québec and in Ontario, he argues that the transition from colonial dependence to national sovereignty in Canada may be seen in the forms and modes of the censuses undertaken in the period between 1840 and 1875.<sup>12</sup> Curtis connects the census and the emergence of a codified system of weights and

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<sup>11</sup> Errington, “Some Reflections: Introduction to the Second Edition,” xxv.

<sup>12</sup> Bruce Curtis, “Preconditions of the Canadian State: Educational Reform and the Construction of a Public in Upper Canada, 1837-1846,” in *Historical Essays on Upper Canada: New Perspectives*, eds. J. K.

measurements to the ways that after 1840, “standardized forms of knowledge, bereft of observational idiosyncrasies and applicable to all domains, acquired a heightened importance.”<sup>13</sup> When I began my own research, I therefore assumed that my focus would be on what “standardized forms of knowledge” accompanied the building projects of Upper Canada’s canals just prior to the years that Curtis’ work studied. I was interested in the ways that Foucault’s theories of governmentality, and more centrally his ideas of security and power, were manifest in the canal building projects in Upper Canada that occurred from 1824. Beginning with the construction of the Welland Canal, these three projects continued into the twentieth century with the extended Trent-Severn waterway expansion. Yet as I began that work, I discovered many maps of the Province that were created and duplicated during the years immediately following the War of 1812. This collection of maps conveyed a kind of lack of knowledge and colonial anxiety that required more and more “accurate” depictions of the place in order to better claim sovereignty and effect security. This was the case both for land within Upper Canada, the

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Johnson and Bruce Wilson, (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), 341–368; Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840-1875* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Bruce Curtis, *Ruling by Schooling Québec: Conquest to Liberal Governmentality, a Historical Sociology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Bruce Curtis, “Monitorial Schooling, ‘Common Christianity,’ and Politics: A Transatlantic Controversy,” in *Transatlantic Subjects: Ideas, Institutions, and Social Experience in Post-Revolutionary British North America*, ed. Nancy Christie (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 251–82; Bruce Curtis, “Official Documentary Systems and Colonial Government: From Imperial Sovereignty to Colonial Autonomy in the Canadas, 1841-1867,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 10, no. 4 (1997): 389–417.

<sup>13</sup> Curtis, *Politics of Population*, 20.



waterways of the St. Lawrence River themselves, and the territory along the American border.<sup>14</sup>

One of the first places I began my research was to look back to the beginning of the Province to attempt to locate some of the cartographic efforts with their origins. As I discovered, the period of time in which these significant waterways were mapped and constructed, the years 1814-1854, received barely two pages in the two-volume work, *The History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers*. And when they do appear, they are dismissed with the heading: “Forty Years of Apathy in Military Matters.”<sup>15</sup> This absence was not for want of sources of documents. As Chandra Mukerji has pointed out for France, “the territoriality of the early modern French state was not achieved without leaving traces in the record books, it was primarily documented in the built environment itself,” an insight that also applies to the colonial state-in-formation in late-eighteenth-century Upper Canada.<sup>16</sup> David Blackbourn has done important work as well describing this kind of state-building exercise in Germany; his work is especially relevant for this project. For Blackbourn, not only is water a central feature of his investigation of the way the modern German state created itself through “the conquest of nature,” but the conquest

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<sup>14</sup> David William Smyth, *A Map of the Province of Upper Canada, Describing All the New Settlements, Townships, &c with the Countries Adjacent from Québec to Lake Huron*, Maps (Charing Cross East: Jas. Wyld, April 12, 1831), Box 2000931303 Item no. assigned by LAC 455; *A Map of the Province of Upper Canada, Describing All the New Settlements, Townships, &c.: With the Countries Adjacent, from Québec to Lake Huron*, [1:1,440,000 approximately] (London: Jas. Wyld, 1854); *A Map of the Province of Upper Canada Describing All the New Settlements, Townships &c with the Countries Adjacent, from Québec to Lake Huron*, Cartographic Material (London: Charing Cross East: Jas. Wyld, Geographer to His Majesty, 1838), R11981-10-9-E, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>15</sup> Armine John Kerry, W.A. McDill, and Military Engineers Association of Canada, *The History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers*, Vol. 1 (Ottawa: Military Engineers Association of Canada, 1962), 18–20.

<sup>16</sup> Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 315.

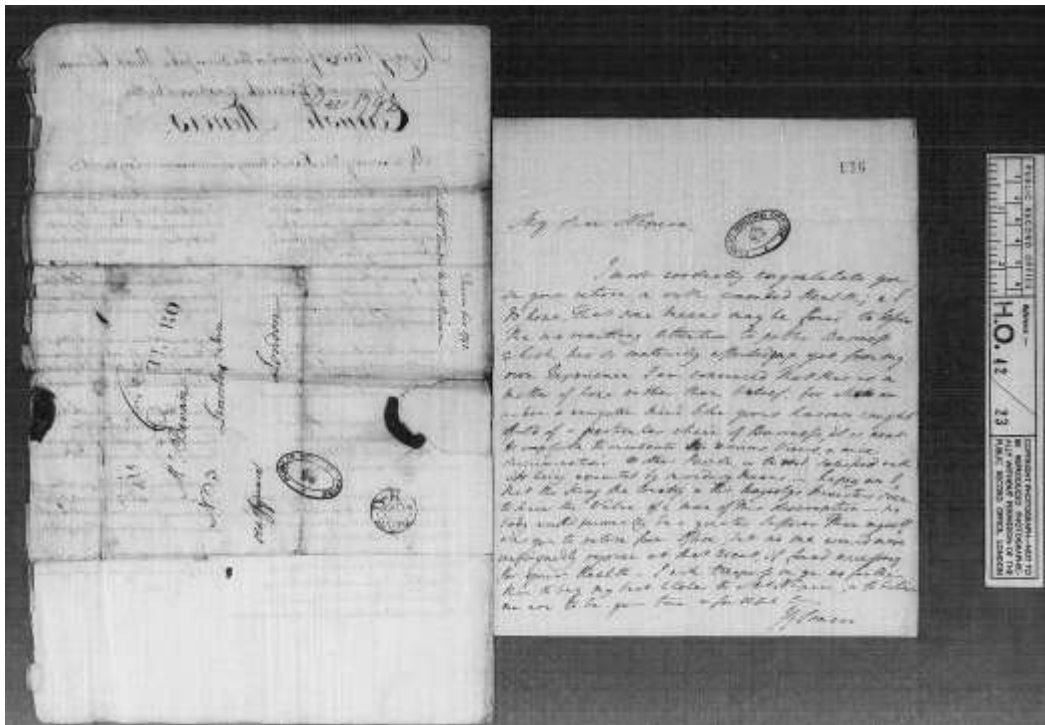
of the earth and the redirection of water was not a subversion of military action towards peaceful norms, but was instead, he argues, “the by-product, even the handmaiden, of war.” These projects, like those of building canals, directed towards the mastery of water, were completely dependent on “modern forms of knowledge” all of which were “also a measure of political power.”<sup>17</sup> My interest was in this process of “mastery of water” but also of territory and knowledge of the territory expressed in cartographic projects in a space like Upper Canada. My research was going to focus on the ways that these actions communicated the processes of political power, and so I began my archival work by looking into the creation of the separate Province of Upper Canada in 1791. As I read the correspondence of John Simcoe, its first Lieutenant Governor, his focus on the waterways of the Province was far greater than I had anticipated, and it was this archive that formed the basis for my research and shifted my focus to the eighteenth century as the timeframe of interest for this dissertation.

The extensive correspondence related to John Simcoe’s tenure, curated by Brigadier General Earnest A. Cruikshank, was first published in 1891 in Toronto. Cruikshank compiled and edited a five-volume set: *The Correspondence of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, with allied documents relating to his administration of the government of Upper Canada*. This exhaustive publication includes letters and relevant papers from before John Simcoe’s appointment to office in 1790 until he returned to England in 1796; the correspondence has been gathered from letters addressed

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<sup>17</sup> David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York: Norton, 2006), 6–7.

to him as well as letters penned by him. The originals are scattered. Some are housed in archives in Devon, UK, near the Wolford estate where the Simcoes lived. Others are parts of the correspondence collected by the men on the other end of John Simcoe's correspondence. These recipients and authors include men like Evan Nepean and the original documents are housed in situ as part of Britain's National Archive (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: “Letter from [John Graves Simcoe] [de Jure Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada] at Wolford Lodge [Honiton, Devon] (1792).”<sup>18</sup>**

Simcoe's correspondence has been more comprehensively gathered. Cruikshank noted in the preface to the second volume of his published collection that “[t]he entire correspondence has now fortunately been transcribed,” and this transcription still

<sup>18</sup> “Letter from [John Graves Simcoe] [de Jure Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada] at Wolford Lodge [Honiton, Devon],” *Letter, December 1792*, HO 42/23, 636-7, National Archive, United Kingdom.

composes the Simcoe Fonds housed in the Library and Archives (LAC) of Canada in Ottawa.<sup>19</sup> The nine boxes in LAC do not include any original documents. They hold the painstakingly handwritten transcription of the letters both authored by John Simcoe and received by him related to his appointment to Upper Canada. These materials compose Canada's national archival records of Simcoe and his time spent in the Province (for an example of one of these transcribed pages, see Figure 3).<sup>20</sup> This scattered and inconsistently curated archive is reflective also of the spatial and temporal space that Upper Canada itself held at the end of the eighteenth century when John and Elizabeth arrived; they were imperially connected but they were often local and particularly focussed.

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<sup>19</sup> Brigadier General E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada*, Vol. 2; 1792–1794 (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), 284; “John Graves Simcoe Fonds” (Textual record (some microform), 1861), Library and Archives Canada. While I have consulted the Simcoe Fonds, for this dissertation I will be citing mostly the published volumes of John Simcoe's correspondence for ease of access for readers and future researchers.

<sup>20</sup> Cecilia Morgan, *Commemorating Canada: History, Heritage, and Memory, 1850s-1990s*, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2016); John C. Walsh, “Becoming a Center: Public History, Assembly, and State Formation in Canada's Capital City, 1880-1939,” in *A Companion to Public History*, ed. David M. Dean (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2018), 135–146.

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Wimbleton  
30<sup>th</sup> July 1791

Sir

I have the honour of your letter, I shall be extremely sorry if any circumstance should deprive the Publick of the Benefit of your Services in Canada, but in the present moment it is impossible for me to give you any Decisive Answer to the Question you put to me, as the Solution of it does not depend exclusively on my opinion. I hope very soon to have the whole of the Canada Business considered and decided upon, and I shall lose no time in apprising you of the Result of the consideration respecting the Point you have more immediately submitted to me by your letter of 23<sup>d</sup>

I have the honour to be, Sir,  
with great Respect,  
your most obedient  
and humble Servant  
Henry Dundas

Col. Simcoe.

A.L.S.

Endorsed H. Dundas

Figure 3: "Letter from Henry Dundas to John Graves Simcoe," (1791).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> "Letter from Henry Dundas to John Graves Simcoe," *Letter, July 30, 1791*, Simcoe Packet A1 (1789-1792), Library and Archives Canada.

John and Elizabeth were a part of a wider imperial effort during this time where technological mastery of space was a central assertion of political power. This has been examined well in the area of mapping projects, specifically. Scholars like geographer J. Brian Harley and historian Matthew Edney contribute to this field of work alongside those like Steven Hornsby and Jeffers Lennox who specifically address these actions in the colonial Canadian context.<sup>22</sup> Harley's *The New Nature of Maps*, for example, fleshes out the ways that "maps have politics." He contends that maps become "signifying systems" through which "a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored. Maps do not simply reproduce a topographical reality; they also interpret it."<sup>23</sup> Rather than serving as historical sources that should be evaluated for their "accuracy," historical maps for Harley are documents that "redescribe the world... in terms of relations of power and of cultural practices, preferences, and priorities... [that are as much] related to an invisible social world and to ideology as it is to phenomena seen and measured in the landscape."<sup>24</sup> Edney focuses more particularly on the way the British Empire constructed itself by expanding its cartographic knowledge. He asserts that "[i]mperialism and mapmaking intersect in the most basic manner," and his analysis of

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<sup>22</sup> Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1; J. Brian Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. Paul Laxton (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 36, Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire*, 1; Jeffers Lennox, "An Empire on Paper: The Founding of Halifax and Conceptions of Imperial Space, 1744-55," *The Canadian Historical Review* 88, no. 3 (2007): 373-412; Jeffers Lennox, "Crossing Borders, Changing Worlds: Eighteenth century Nova Scotia's Atlantic Connections," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 42, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 213-19; Jeffers Lennox, *Homelands and Empires: Indigenous Spaces, Imperial Fictions, and Competition for Territory in Northeastern North America, 1690-1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 36.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

the ways this was manifest by the British Empire in India is especially relevant for similar imperial actions like those of the Simcoes in Upper Canada.<sup>25</sup>

For Edney, the centrality of cartographic projects to the production of territory cannot be overstated. He intimately connects the construction of knowledge with imperial efforts of increasingly accurately mapping territories. “Knowledge of the territory,” he claims, “is determined by geographic representations and most especially by the map. Geography and Empire are thus intimately and thoroughly interwoven...To govern territories, one must know them.”<sup>26</sup> For Edney, the maps the British made of their colony in India do not speak about the knowledge of the territory but rather their lack of any kind of true idea of the space itself.

Felix Driver and Luciana Martins build off of this idea and remind us that it is the “limits of a projection model of visual representation in which prior assumptions about cultural and natural difference are treated as powerful labels, constructed in the process of European expansion and pinned on other cultures and regions.”<sup>27</sup> Rather than science granting answers and slowly illuminating the world hitherto unknown to the would-be colonisers, they contend that cartographic projects speak more about the limits of the epistemological underpinnings of the Enlightenment project to actually experience or know territory. They argue that instead of demonstrating superior technology, it actually reveals “disorientation, in attempts to negotiate different ways of seeing; in the tensions

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<sup>25</sup> Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Felix Driver and Luciana Martins, “John Septimus Roe and the Art of Navigation, c. 1815-1830,” *History Workshop Journal* 54, No. 1 (2002): 145.

between the knowledge of the study and that of the field; in transactions between various groups... the imperial eye appears not as transcendent, all-knowing, global, but instead as situated, partial, local.”<sup>28</sup> This is an important argument to support Edney’s assertion that the idea of territory as we know it was formed by the obsession with empirical forms of knowledge underpinned by the increasing reliance on science for the European mind. John and Elizabeth Simcoe were imperial agents who were dedicated to the idea that an accurate and technological knowledge of Upper Canada was a part of projecting imperial power within this space.

The other theorist who looms large in my framing of this research is Michel Foucault. His work around governmentality and the kinds of power/knowledge relationships inherent in projections of sovereignty over territory and population are refrains that echo loudly throughout the imperial actions by Simcoe and others within this territory of Upper Canada. “What rules of right,” Foucault posed in 1977, “are implemented by the relations of power in the production of discourses of truth?”<sup>29</sup> Foucault contends that these kinds of efforts must be understood as exercises of power. “Power,” he writes, “never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit.”<sup>30</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century in Upper Canada, both the imperial and the burgeoning colonial state that followed, were engaged in this “registration of truth.” For my project, the imperial state is the focus. The British Empire and its agents like the Simcoes were obsessed with

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<sup>28</sup> Driver and Martins, “John Septimus Roe and the Art of Navigation,” 145.

<sup>29</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 93.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



producing what they claimed were accurate and objective depictions of the physical landscape in Upper Canada in order to know where and how canals should be constructed. This was the case for projects of transportation to enhance trade, but it was also ostensibly for increased territorial and socio-cultural security.

In his published lectures on security, territory, and population at the College de France in the 1970s, Foucault explicitly links the importance of circulation to “the political effectiveness of sovereignty.” He differentiates between two kinds of activity towards structuring space: discipline and circulation. The first, that of “discipline,” he places in the mid-seventeenth century in France under Louis the XIII and Louis the XIV. He describes how this was exemplified in “disciplinary towns such as Richelieu, Kristiania, and suchlike.” He argues that “[d]iscipline works in an empty, artificial space that is to be completely constructed.”<sup>31</sup> He contrasts this to spaces that are already inhabited where beginning from a blank slate in order to impose discipline is not the priority. For this example, to explain the concept of “circulation” he uses the French town of Nantes in the eighteenth century. In Nantes, city planners sought to ensure a better kind of circulation that “involved cutting routes through the town, and streets wide enough to ensure its four functions:” hygiene, ensuring trade, connecting the internal streets to external routs, and “finally, an important problem for towns in the eighteenth century was allowing for surveillance.”<sup>32</sup> For Foucault, “[c]irculation” in Nantes and beyond, at its most basic refers to ... “Security,” and this combination relies “on a

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<sup>31</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: St Martins Press, 2009), 19.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

number of material givens... the flows of water, islands, air, and so forth... it is simply a matter of maximizing the positive elements, for which one provides the best possible circulation, and of minimizing what is risky and inconvenient.”<sup>33</sup>

Foucault seeks to differentiate between sovereignty, which he contends is “exercised within the borders of a territory,” and “discipline [which] is exercised on the bodies of individuals, and security [which] is exercised over a whole population.” He contends that the “idea of sovereignty over an unpopulated territory is not only a juridically and politically acceptable idea, but one that is absolutely accepted and primary.”<sup>34</sup> In this lecture, Foucault distinguishes explicitly between the concepts of discipline and security. While at points he identifies the subject of discipline as “bodies of individuals,” he also applies it geographically. He argues that discipline also “works in an empty, artificial space that is to be completely constructed.” The ideal of a space that is disciplined is one that is “reconstructed to arrive at a point of perfection.” This is in contrast to security over space which, Foucault concludes, works within the constraints that exist and is an effort to maximize “the positive elements, for which one provides the best possible circulation, and of minimizing what is risky and inconvenient.”<sup>35</sup>

Stuart Elden reminds us that it is in lecture four of this series that Foucault begins a shift towards replacing “territory” with “government” in his triangle of concern. Elden poses the question: “Why is there a shift from a state of territory to one of population, or perhaps from a state primarily concerned with territory to one concerned with

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<sup>33</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 19.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 19.

population?”<sup>36</sup> For Elden, this is an important shift, and one that should be considered by those in his field of geography; in order to measure population, he contends, you need a territorial knowledge to apply “distribution.”<sup>37</sup> Centring my research at the end of the eighteenth century in British North America where both the population and the territory were unknown (to imperial actors), is a poignant example of how these two concepts, territory and population, are both central components of attempt to govern and to secure space. Elden concludes that

in the era of security both territory and population are understood in a transformed sense. Indeed, we could make the claim that the categories of “population” and “territory” themselves only really emerge at this political juncture... Territory is more than merely land, but a rendering of the emergent concept of “space” as a political category: owned, distributed, mapped, calculated, bordered, and controlled. Foucault’s notion of the politics of calculation is therefore crucial, but not as something which only manifests itself in population, but, rather, in territory too. The same kinds of mechanisms can be found in both, at root grounded in the relation between governmentality and calculation.<sup>38</sup>

While Foucault’s work specifically differentiates between “discipline” and “security,” I do not accept this sharp division between the two concepts, nor do I find his distinction between these satisfying. I contend that efforts towards disciplining geographical space, at least those that existed in Upper Canada in the late-eighteenth century, were inextricably linked with efforts toward what I would define also as increasing or enhancing security within the space. Perhaps this is because it was not void of

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<sup>36</sup> Stuart Elden, *Terror and Territory: The Spatial Extent of Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 563.

<sup>37</sup> Stuart Elden, “Governmentality, Calculation, Territory,” *Environ Plan D Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, No. 3 (2007): 575.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 578.

inhabitants, but neither was it a space where towns like that of Nantes in France had been built and continuously inhabited by a recognisable population. Concerns of discipline are concerns towards security, and in this dissertation, I have at times conflated these two important kinds of efforts undertaken by actors like the Simcoes because these are acts that are intertwined. I intend to use the term “security” to connote this kind of “discipline” or effort to both reconstruct geographic space and to also efforts by imperial actors to promote better circulation and control over elements to minimize risk.

The term security in a broader context, and generally applied to wider global considerations, dominated some of the scholarship of the past two decades across a variety of disciplines and perspectives. These notions included the acknowledgement that security of trade, security of person, environmental security, food security and most of all, the security of state borders is all at once interconnected and at times are at odds with one another.<sup>39</sup> Understanding security in this more inclusive sense has informed the ways I have encountered late-eighteenth-century Upper Canada. Notions of security are often linked to governance and are implicated explicitly by border formation and definition and specifically, nation-states. Important and insightful work has been done regarding state formation in Canada in the early nineteenth century<sup>40</sup> and much has been made of the

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<sup>39</sup> Mary Kaldor, *Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2007), 10; Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh and Anuradha M. Chenoy, *Human Security: Concepts and Implications* (London: Routledge, 2007), 3.

<sup>40</sup> Stéphane Castonguay and Darin Kinsey, “The Nature of the Liberal Order: State Formation, Conservation, and the Government of Non-Humans in Canada,” in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, eds. Michel Ducharme and Jean-François Constant (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 274–97; Curtis, *Politics of Population*; Curtis, *Ruling by Schooling Québec*; Elsbeth Heaman, *The Inglorious Arts of Peace: Exhibitions in Canadian Society During the Nineteenth Century*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), J. K. Johnson, *In Duty Bound: Men*,

military history of the area, especially around the bicentenary of the War of 1812.<sup>41</sup> Some scholars have noted the transnationality of this political space in Upper Canada, and they also acknowledge how the border with the United States was central for the formation of the state during this time.<sup>42</sup> Important considerations of what kind of state actually was developing in the current space of “Canada” have also been addressed by several scholars. These efforts that often implicate borderlands and include post-colonial considerations, however, have largely focussed on the edges of Upper Canada including the western great lakes region and are most concentrated in areas even further west or east and ignore the problematic central designation of Upper Canada.<sup>43</sup>

Along with other agents of the British Empire in North America and around the

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*Women, and the State in Upper Canada, 1783-1841* (Montréal; Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Troy O. Bickham, *The Weight of Vengeance: The United States, the British Empire, and the War of 1812* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); J. T. Copp, *1812: A Guide to the War and Its Legacy* (Waterloo, ON: LCMSDS, 2013); Richard Feltoe, *The Tide of War: The 1814 Invasions of Upper Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2013); John R. Grodzinski, *Defender of Canada: Sir George Prevost and the War Of 1812* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2013); Ontario Genealogical Society, Niagara Peninsula Branch, and War of 1812 Commemorative Committee, *More than a Mere Matter of Marching: A Bicentennial War of 1812 Project*, 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American,” *American Historical Review* 104, No. 3 (June 1999): 814; John J. Bukowczyk, ed., *Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650-1990* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005); Francis M. Carroll, *A Good and Wise Measure: The Search for the Canadian-American Boundary, 1783-1842* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Lawrence B. A. Hatter, *Citizens of Convenience: The Imperial Origins of American Nationhood on the U.S.-Canadian Border* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017); Bradley Miller, *Borderline Crime: Fugitive Criminals and the Challenge of the Border, 1819-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Diana Preston, *The Defence of the undefended Border* (Montréal; Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1977); Alan Taylor, *The Late Loyalists: Northern Reflections of the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia, 2007).

<sup>43</sup> Bukowczyk, *Permeable Border*; Clayton, *Islands of Truth*; Herman J. Deutsch, *Surveying the 49th Parallel, 1858-61: United States-Canada Boundary in the Pacific Northwest* (Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1962); Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002); Sheila McManus, *Line Which Separates: Race, Gender, and the Making of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

world in the 1790s, John and Elizabeth assumed that their increased knowledge of the St. Lawrence River and its surroundings, through surveying and thence more “accurate” mapping endeavours of the topography, would lead to a more secure and better governed Province of Upper Canada. Edward Said contends of imperial actors that “[i]mperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control.”<sup>44</sup> Imperial agents in North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries assumed that the defence of their colonies could be secured and that the territory would become more governable once they possessed knowledge of its shape, once its geography was known by them. The reverse of this, the fact that their present knowledge was incomplete and vacuous, created a deep sense of insecurity that dictated their priorities in and towards this place at the end of the eighteenth century. The British Empire’s actions, the actions of its main agents, towards this space were deeply influenced by the primary technologies of the time: namely, surveying, cartography, and canal building. The possibilities of these dictated that the territory would inevitably be known through these technologically driven Empire-building acts. Imperial aspirations and priorities were predicated upon the assumption that previous interactions that other people had experienced within and towards this space did not constitute the same kind of knowledge, and therefore rights of possession, that would follow their own endeavours. Indigenous peoples, such as the Anishinaabeg, were glaringly excluded from imperial considerations of the territory, but in 1791, others were also excluded. Some of these were Québécois who lived east of the Ottawa River. There

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<sup>44</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 225.

were even white, Anglo-Saxon settlers who lived along the banks of the St. Lawrence River who were ignored or unacknowledged by imperial designs for the colony.

Said is one of many scholars who have written about histories whose narratives ignore this kind of exclusion of other ways of being and knowing, in favour of overarching claims or histories of North America that rely heavily on western epistemological conventions.<sup>45</sup> As Dipesh Chakrabarty has demonstrated, that in this way “the academic discourse of history” retains “Europe” as its “sovereign and theoretical subject.”<sup>46</sup> His work is concerned with histories of specifically African, Middle-Eastern, and Asian continents, but North American histories are no exception to this kind of totalising silence. The histories of colonial North American spaces continue, by and large, to be European histories and Europe remains what Chakrabarty terms the “silent referent” of nearly every kind of historiography of eighteenth-century Canada.<sup>47</sup> Chakrabarty’s efforts to illuminate the invisible assumptions of European places and actions belong to a much wider post-colonial interrogation of hegemonic narratives. Another important ally in this project is Chakrabarty’s close friend, Homi Bhabha, who has encouraged historians of Empire to recognise “an interruptive time-lag in the

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<sup>45</sup> Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005); Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); McManus, *Line Which Separates*, Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Ann Laura Stoler, *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Ann Laura Stoler, “Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 1 (1989): 134–61.

<sup>46</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 27.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

progressive myth of modernity, and [enable] the diasporic and the postcolonial to be represented.”<sup>48</sup> Bhabha’s use of spatial terms to locate culture is of particular relevance to this dissertation. Spatial analysis is a crucial component of his proposal to remedy some of the problems inherent in “the self-inventions of modernity.”<sup>49</sup> He identifies modernity’s “‘synchronous and spatial’ representation of cultural difference [as that which] must be reworked as a framework for cultural otherness within the general dialectic of doubling that postmodernism proposes.”<sup>50</sup> He goes so far as to contend that “without the post-colonial time-lag the discourse of modernity cannot... be written.”<sup>51</sup> This assertion is especially poignant in considering attempts to represent Canada’s past in any kind of way without acknowledging the lags, gaps, and in-betweens of its past, especially in its relationship to Empire.

Julie Cruikshank explains the importance of this kind of inquiry specifically in relation to Canada’s past:

Postcolonial theory forces us to look critically at how Enlightenment categories, like nature and culture, were exported from Europe through the expansion of Empire to places deemed to be at “the verge of the world,” and at how those categories have become sedimented in contemporary practices... This touchstone of Western rationality – the idea that a measurable natural world might be pried from its cultural moorings – has continued to insinuate itself in places and landscapes

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<sup>48</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 344.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.



where local understandings were conventionally framed very differently.<sup>52</sup>

She connects Europeans' ways of knowing to their subsequent imperial expansion around the world, and in North America in particular. In her work she also points out the central importance for these European expansionist projects of measuring and categorizing the natural world to this endeavour. As is shown in later chapters, these spatial "framings" imported from Europe were very different from Indigenous' ideas of the places that lay within what would be designated as "Upper Canada." Imperial agents' encounters with the geography, specifically the waterways, of Upper Canada, communicated explicitly their notions of Empire, civilisation and knowledge in ways that exposed their notions of power and their epistemologies.<sup>53</sup>

Bhabha goes so far as to contend, "it is through these iterative interrogations and historical initiations that the cultural place of modernity shifts to the postcolonial site."<sup>54</sup> He exhorts this method, this inclusion of the "in-between" as the transformation of "our sense of what it means to live, to be, in other times and different spaces, both human and historical."<sup>55</sup> Bhabha claims that it is the "'in-between' spaces [that] provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself."<sup>56</sup> Chakrabarty stresses that as we interrogate the past we must

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<sup>52</sup> Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?*, 258.

<sup>53</sup> Lauren A. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400--1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), x.

<sup>54</sup> Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 360.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

allow ourselves to also inhabit the spaces we interrogate and acknowledge the tenuously constructed and perilously positioned place of our own time/space.

This ontological “now,” that precedes the historical gap that the historian’s methods both assume and posit between the “there-and-then” and the “here-and-now.” Thus what underlies our capacity to historicize is our capacity not to. What gives us a point of entry into the times of gods and spirits—times that are seemingly very different from the empty, secular, and homogenous time of history—is that they are never completely alien; we inhabit them to begin with.<sup>57</sup>

The central importance of recognising our position within time-knots echoes Bhabha’s imperative that we encounter modernity in a new way, through “another locus of inscription and intervention, another hybrid, ‘inappropriate’ enunciative site, through that temporal split – or time-lag.”<sup>58</sup>

As historians, we face dilemmas at every spatial and temporal turn both in our encounters with the archive and in our writing: how can we critique our present, our recent and more distant past, in any meaningful way without engaging in a kind of tautological argument of our own existence or pre-existence? How can we acknowledge the existence of a post-colonial reality that much of Canada inhabits while we ourselves presently inhabit this space? In this project I hope to illuminate some of the ways that people as prominent as the Simcoes were included in a consistent and systematic “othering” at the end of the eighteenth century and into the next while the British Empire created a totalising space called “Upper Canada.”<sup>59</sup> This kind of exclusionary activity is important to include and acknowledge in narrations of Canada’s past because it interrupts

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<sup>57</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 113.

<sup>58</sup> Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 346.

<sup>59</sup> Clayton, *Islands of Hope*, xx.

the sometimes totalising and opaque kind of prioritisation of the nation state.<sup>60</sup> The danger, if this imperial activity is ignored is that the histories of “pre-Confederation Canada” may become an historical narration that leads to an entity (“Canada”) that is already assumed to be “on its way:” a teleological notion of a yet-to-be nation that ignores the experiences of those who lived during this time. In doing so we write the story of a past whose present weight and “haunting” belies its telling.<sup>61</sup> Histories of the Province of Upper Canada are often siloed in a sort of pre-pre-Confederation history category, if they are lucky, or worse, written as a prologue to the more important chapters of Canada’s national emergence in 1867.

Exceptions to this include Gerald Craig’s somewhat interruptive book, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years 1784-1841*. While it appeared as part of the commemorative *Canadian Centenary Series*, the place of this book as volume seven of the nineteen in the series undermines its contents. Craig’s work is placed as an introduction to a series that heralds a soon-to-be nation, rather than occupying a category of its own space and its place as part of a global Empire. Craig resisted the moniker of “Genesis” for his work, one that the series’ editor suggested, insisting instead that his book hold a different title that communicated the discrete nature of its past and place in Canada’s past.<sup>62</sup> Craig, himself, however, writing in 1963, resided in a time and place in which the full implications of Canada’s relationship to an imperial past were not fully

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<sup>60</sup> Clayton, *Islands of Hope*, xx.

<sup>61</sup> Stoler, *Haunted by Empire*, 1; Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 24.

<sup>62</sup> Jeffrey L. McNairn, “Introduction to the Wynford Edition,” in *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784-1841*, by Gerald M. Craig (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2013), iii–xviii.

revealed. His interpretation of the colonial government that was established in 1791 thus reads the imperial correspondence to insinuate the eventual divorce of the place from the Empire. It reads these letters as though the Empire's grasp of its colonies was not omnipotent. Craig's account of a time period when imperial priorities and realities dominated the correspondence, words and actions of those about whom he wrote, contain a remarkably small number of uses of the actual term "Empire" or "imperial."<sup>63</sup> Words and their usage are a product of the time and place in which historians operate, but Craig's own place and space of inquiry into Canada's past was not one in which the Empire was brought into specific or discrete relief from its colonial others.

Both before and since Craig, scholars have written much about Upper Canada. Whether these ostensibly seek the past of this specific locale or whether they are a history of the whole of Canada that is weighted most heavily by this province, it is not difficult to find scholarship about this time and place.<sup>64</sup> Collected works such as *Old Ontario: Essays*

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<sup>63</sup> There are 31 appearances of "Empire" and 25 of "imperial." By contrast, this dissertation, which is far shorter in comparison, albeit quite different in scope, contains around 225 uses of "Empire" and over 275 of "imperial." Craig, *Upper Canada* (1963).

<sup>64</sup> Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); John George Bourinot, *Canada under British Rule, 1760-1900* (Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 1900); Robert D. Bradford, *Historic Forts of Ontario* (Belleville, Ont.: Mika Pub. Co., 1988); J. M. S. Careless, *Canada: A Story of Challenge* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964); Nancy Christie, *Transatlantic Subjects: Ideas, Institutions, and Social Experience in Post-Revolutionary British North America* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008); Donald Grant Creighton, *Dominion of the North: A History of Canada* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944); Norman Kenneth Crowder, *Early Ontario Settlers: A Source Book* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1993); A. A. den Otter, *Civilizing the Wilderness: Culture and Nature in Pre-Confederation Canada and Rupert's Land* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2012); Department of National Defence Canada, *The Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers: A Brief History* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1948); R. Douglas Francis and Donald B. Smith, eds., *Readings in Canadian History: Pre-Confederation* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1994); J. K. Johnson and Bruce Wilson, eds., *Historical Essays on Upper Canada: New Perspectives* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989); Johnson, *In Duty Bound*; David Keane and Colin Read, eds., *Old Ontario: Essays in Honour of J.M.S. Careless* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1990); Preston, *The Defence of the undefended Border*; Virginia R. Robeson and Patrick Douglas, *Upper Canada in the 1830's* (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1977); Elizabeth Vincent, *Substance and Practice:*

*in Honor of J.M.S. Careless*, for example, purport to offer a “kaleidoscopic reality which is Canada.”<sup>65</sup> It contains discrete chapters on themes including farming, religion, politics, the Rebellions, land policies, the clothing industry, and education.<sup>66</sup> More specifically directed towards the political economies at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, Douglas McCalla’s *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada, 1784-1870* covers everything from the forest industry to manufacturing, transportation and trade.<sup>67</sup> With his lens focussed clearly on economics he considers this an important aspect to building the canals: from steamship technology to the need to find a more efficient way for Upper Canada’s goods to find their way across the ocean to European markets. Private investors with vested economic interests provided the financial backing for some of these projects but, for the most part, these waterways were largely backed by government(s) and required heavy investments from overseas.<sup>68</sup> Others, like Carol Wilton and Cecilia Morgan have made important contributions regarding the place of the political outside of ostensible political structures where, despite increasingly rigid gender strictures, men and women participated in more localised and social ways that were no less political.<sup>69</sup> Overtly political expressions—elites and others

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*Building Technology and the Royal Engineers in Canada* (Ottawa, Ont.: National Historic Sites, Parks Service, Environment Canada, 1993); John J. Vrooman, *Forts and Firesides of the Mohawk Country, New York: Stories and Pictures of Landmarks of the Pre-Revolutionary War Period throughout the Mohawk Valley and Surrounding Countryside, Including Some Historical and Genealogical Mention during the Post-War Period* (Johnstown, N.Y.: Baronet Litho Co., 1951) .

<sup>65</sup> Keane and Read, *Old Ontario*, 66.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–5.

<sup>67</sup> Douglas McCalla, *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada, 1784-1870* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 122.

<sup>68</sup> McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 122.

<sup>69</sup> Cecilia Louise Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: The Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada, 1791-1850* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Cecilia Morgan, Mariana Valverde, and Lykke de la Cour, “Gender Regulation and State Formation in Nineteenth-

who considered themselves to compose the structure of the nascent political structure of colonial Upper Canada are the focus of other scholars' works.<sup>70</sup>

At its most ambitious level, this dissertation is intended to be an interruption. My goal is not to insert a paragraph into pre-Confederation Canadian history, nor is it a biography of the Simcoes. It is an attempt to interrogate and reflect on a time/space encounter that profoundly impacted the people and landscapes that were present between 1791 and 1796 in the geographic place they termed "Upper Canada." Some of the interactions with places and persons that occurred during the Simcoes' four-year tenure in this space still ripple and pool, penetrate, disrupt, and unsettle both narratives of the past and experiences in the present in the geographies along the St. Lawrence River. This list includes places east and west, and profoundly, distant Atlantic coastlines. The willing insertion of an idea of Upper Canada as part of one that narrates simply the future state of Canada serves to co-opt the imperial efforts that were manifested by the Simcoes as a national historical narrative. This problematically flattens other experiences and vestiges of Empire and leaves gaps that histories of the Canadian state omit.

The following chapters explore how some of the many ways of knowing and being in the space were silenced and subverted through the actions of both John Simcoe and Elizabeth Simcoe, deeds that were abetted by imperial agents on the other side of the Atlantic. Specifically, in Chapters Two and Three, that focus heavily on John and

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century Canada," in Greer and Radforth; Carol Wilton, *Popular Politics and Political Culture in Upper Canada, 1800-1850* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 4.

<sup>70</sup> For example, Errington, "Some Reflections: Introduction to the Second Edition," xx; Greer and Radforth, *Colonial Leviathan*; McNair, *Capacity to Judge*.

Elizabeth Simcoe, this project seeks to examine the ways in which they embodied imperial aspirations towards this British colony in ways that must be interrogated on their own terms and in their own time rather than as a forward or prefiguring movement that was part of a progressive inevitability towards the future or space that Canada presently inhabits. John and Elizabeth's perspective of British North America, and specific locations along the St. Lawrence River in Upper and Lower Canada, were as a space to be colonised and, always, a subjugated place within the broader scope and notion of the British Empire. Said contends that "[e]verything about human history is rooted in the earth, which has meant that we must think about habitation... At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that it is distant, that is lived on and owned by others."<sup>71</sup> My aim is to centre the imperial nature of John and Elizabeth's actions, thoughts, and intentions towards the territory in North America claimed by the British Empire.

### **Description of Chapters**

Chapter Two of this dissertation considers the importance of water as a protagonist for human existence and interaction. John and Elizabeth both were heavily influenced by their interactions with water but specifically by the St. Lawrence River system. One of the reasons this waterway was of interest to me even before the Simcoes became objects of my research, was because of the ways that historian Harold Innis insisted that Canada's history was indelibly shaped by geographical realities. Innis'

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<sup>71</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 7.

tenacious focus on human responses to geography has deeply influenced the questions I pose. Because of its naval capacity and recently acquired dominance in Europe through its fleet, British imperial actors at the end of the eighteenth century had every reason to crave the kind of circulation and control that the St. Lawrence River and its relatively deep waters had carved in an east-west trajectory in their North American colonies.<sup>72</sup>

The waterways of the Province were both challenges and boons to British efforts to project sovereignty over space. Known and unknown waterways often formed the boundaries of political spaces. This chapter examines how acts of imperial subjugation and cooption were written into documents that created the Province but also were a significant part of the process of the appointment of the Lieutenant Governor. This was done in myriad ways, but I argue that even titled settlers with significant imperial ties like Loyalist Sir John Johnson (1741-1830) were excluded from the colonial power structure that the Empire was bent on establishing. John Simcoe was selected as Lieutenant Governor precisely because he was not connected through blood or soil to the Canadian landscape and thus Home Secretaries W. W. Grenville (1759-1834) and his successor, Henry Dundas (1742-1811), saw John as an imperial actor first and not at all as an aspirational colonial settler as they did his rivals for the position.<sup>73</sup> This distinction

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<sup>72</sup> Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Before Columbus: Exploration and Colonisation from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229-1492*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); Bukowczyk, *Permeable Border*; Daniel Drache, "Celebrating Innis: The Man, the Legacy, and Our Future," in *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change*, by Harold Adams Innis (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press 1995), xxvii; Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000); Harold A. Innis, *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 107.

<sup>73</sup> W. W. Grenville to Lord Dorchester, (Private and Confidential), Whitehall, 3 June 1790, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789-1793:13.



between what kind of loyalty and what kind of connection between person and land or person and Empire must exist is at the core of how historians continue to define persons' relationships to nations and states. My goal is to create an interruption into the narrative of "pre-confederation" Upper Canadian history by focussing my inquiry onto the agents of Empire rather than upon merely their actions or the effort of telling a "history" of the colony or this geographical place as seen through the gazes and produced by the sources of these agents themselves. The sources I have used for this include many excerpts from Ernest Alexander Cruikshank's five-volume work, *The Correspondence of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada*, published in 1923.<sup>74</sup> Other published volumes of correspondence and legislation relating to the administration of Upper and Lower Canada were also valuable resources.<sup>75</sup>

Chapter Three considers Elizabeth Simcoe as an imperial actor and assesses her views of the water and place of Upper Canada. My argument is that she and her husband's actions and intentions towards the place were as a part of the Empire and contextualising their administrative and colonial efforts towards this geographical territory must be read as such. Rather than read her words to examine a "woman's" experience, or as a precursor to the eventual Canadian state, I am interested in her ways

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<sup>74</sup> Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, Vols. 1-5.

<sup>75</sup> Alexander Fraser, "Third Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario, 1905," in *Sessional Papers of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario: Second Session of Eleventh Legislature*, ed. Province of Ontario, Volume 38, Issue 9 (Ontario, 1906); Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, eds., *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 1759-1791*, Vol. 1 (Ottawa, Canada: Printed by S. E. Dawson, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1907).

of being and knowing as an imperial agent. Most of my sources for this chapter were an exploration of the various works that compose what I will simply refer to as Elizabeth Simcoe's "diaries." As scholars like Mary Quayle Innis, Mary Beacock Fryer, and more recently, Denis Longchamps, have articulated, these collections that have been published are a compilation of notes, letters, and a more formal "diary" that have been collected and published in a couple of different formats.<sup>76</sup> Most of my excerpts are derived from the older John Ross Robertson edition of the diary for a number of reasons, but in some cases I have inserted contrasts from Innis' version. One of the reasons I opted to use the older version was the commentary that Robertson included that compelled me to examine the imperial nature of the source. As I argue in the chapter, Robertson sought to amplify this aspect of Elizabeth's writing, and his obsession with her lineage fills the first twelve pages of his book.<sup>77</sup>

Elizabeth's focus on the waterways of Upper Canada was a catalyst for me to examine more deeply her husband's views of the same. The excerpts that described her river voyages and her views on surveying and mapping were in many ways more explicit and revealing than those I had encountered by the men engaged formally in these endeavours. Her words and insights inspired the focus of this project to be the late-eighteenth century rather than the mid-nineteenth. Because she played such a significant role in the development of my interest in this time and place, her voice and image are

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<sup>76</sup> Simcoe and Innis, *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*; Mary Beacock Fryer, *Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe, 1762-1850: A Biography* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1989); Denis Longchamps, "Political Tourism: Elizabeth Simcoe's Maps and Views of Canada (1791-1796)," *Imago Mundi* 66, no. 2 (July 3, 2014): 213-23.

<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth Simcoe and J. Ross Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe: Wife of the First Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada 1792-6* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 1-12.

clearer to me than the character of John Simcoe. He remains veiled and enigmatic in some senses, while she and her intentions towards the place of Upper Canada are more clearly articulated and purposeful. The kinds of sources each generated, (one a more personal collection of writings and sketches and the other a formal archive of public correspondence) are one of the obvious reasons for this exposure and obscurity.

Joan Wallach Scott exhorts us to “become more self-conscious about distinguishing between our analytic vocabulary and the material we want to analyse” and to “find ways (however imperfect) to continually subject our categories to criticism, our analysis to self-criticism.”<sup>78</sup> In this vein, I attempt to read Elizabeth’s diaries as I do her husband’s correspondence, and perhaps more importantly, vice versa. Rather than referring to John Graves Simcoe as “Simcoe” as I began to do in my first drafts, for the chapters that focus specifically on Elizabeth and him, I refer to him as “John” just as I do to his wife as “Elizabeth.” This is one of the ways I am imperfectly but intentionally being more self-conscious of the ways I assume and allow my own gendered perspective to totalise and shape the ways I read the sources at hand. My intention is to make audible and more visible the imperial assumptions and forms represented through John Graves Simcoe, the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada and his wife, Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim Simcoe. This endeavour is not intended to amplify the imperial voice of the representation of this place in the past but rather to tease out ways that this imperial and European bias has been represented as a full kind of knowledge or insight into the varied

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<sup>78</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053-1075, 1065.

and still clouded past of spaces like Upper Canada at the end of the eighteenth century. Instead of a moment in the progression of the imperial past into the present/future of the Canadian state, the minds of these “thinking men [and women]” were turned towards the Province in time and space in a different kind of way than is often represented in Canadian historiography.<sup>79</sup>

Chapter Four provides an historical survey of surveying and mapmaking by the British in the eighteenth century. My argument is that this more precise technology of spatial representation was developed because of projects of imperial expansion like that of Upper Canada and that it was not merely an extension of European scientific expertise imported across the Atlantic. Samuel Holland (1728-1801), the first Surveyor General of British North America played a role in developing methods of surveying as a discipline through his work in surveying in Canada. An increasing need for accuracy in measurement and spatial depiction was necessary because of the existence of colonial places that British did not know well enough to govern.

Chapter Five considers the importance of examining the role of the creation of population in Upper Canada both through a Foucauldian analysis of power relationships but also in the ways that defining and creating population was an imperial exercise that necessarily created a colonial populace and sought to establish “security” within territory. This must include not only the Anishinaabe, Iroquois, Huron-Wednat, Mississauga, and Odawa people present within their traditional territory as a “problematic” kind of

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<sup>79</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Evan Nepean, Wolford Lodge, 3 December 1789, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:7.

population, but it also included current settler residents of the space that became the Province of Upper Canada. Some of the best examples of the ways this manifest are in the correspondence surrounding the appointment of John Simcoe to the position of Lieutenant Governor. Also enlightening are the ways that Elizabeth and John as well as members of John's exploratory parties described their encounters.

Chapter Six traces the historiography of Upper Canadian canals and applies a wider historical, cultural, and geographic context to these by examining the construction and legacy of canal projects in Europe and beyond. It also connects the work and plans of John Simcoe to their eventual construction in the mid-nineteenth century that occurred after his death in 1806, and long after he had departed Upper Canada in 1796.

## Chapter Two: Water and Imperial Networks of Power

*We dined in the boat, and the heat was excessive, but the evening calm and so very pleasant as almost to persuade me it is worth while to cross the Atlantic for the pleasure of voyaging on this delightful lake-like river, the setting sun reflecting the deepest shades from the shores and throwing rich tints on the water.*

–Elizabeth Simcoe (Tuesday, 12 June 1792).<sup>1</sup>

It is no great or profound insight to state that water is at the centre of human activity and existence. Michel Foucault insists that it is an essential element upon which the security of the individual or collective is predicated.<sup>2</sup> Humans are so very dependent upon water that their places of being, permanent or temporary, have always included the necessity of some source of drinkable water in order for basic survival. Water and its availability or paucity has dictated, demanded, directed, and devastated human attempts to settle in any geographic place. Basic sustenance is not the only reason human development has always been so water-centric. As Foucault contends in his lectures on *Security, Territory and Population*, the smooth or interrupted, pure or contaminated, organic or constructed features of bodies of water are at the heart of governing, knowing, and ensuring the security of spaces for human existence.<sup>3</sup>

Of specific interest to Foucault was the hyper-focus on quantifying space for the purpose of governance that reached a pinnacle in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century. During this time in Europe, obsessions with clearer and more accurate

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Simcoe and J. Ross Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe: Wife of the First Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada 1792-6* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 92.

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: St. Martins Press, 2009), 19.

<sup>3</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 17–19.

ways of knowing space specifically for the purposes of facilitating transportation was inexorably linked to the expansion of governance or exertion of power over geography. European powers assumed that a central predicate for security of a place was the clearing out the miasma of society and, more importantly, facilitating purer passages for water.<sup>4</sup> Lauren Benton ascribes a nearly “mythical promise” to the potential of “distant riverine regions” for European empire builders.<sup>5</sup> Waterways most efficiently facilitated the transportation of goods, and this feature was for them also an important component of a “healthy” or secure space.

Projects of engineering canals and the efforts towards the routing and rerouting of rivers, and building dams and bridges were all an important component to facilitate the most energy-efficient method of transport for almost anything: people, machinery, weapons, supplies, news, and so forth. Post-European contact experiences on the North American continent in the eighteenth century provide especially poignant examples of the deep and persuasive influence the presence or paucity of water had on the place, timing, and efficacy of security assumptions of European actions.

Foucault contends that this is the end goal of constructing geographical knowledge in the context of territoriality; that is, the attempt towards translation of actual space into a coherent idea of space with the goal of controlling and governing this space.<sup>6</sup> One of the ways to attempt to discern what imperial actors like John Simcoe desired to

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<sup>4</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 17–19.

<sup>5</sup> Lauren A. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400--1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 98.

achieve through their governmental endeavours is to assess where their words and actions regarding territory, power, and knowledge intersect. For Foucault this is most apparent where governments relate to people; the relational nature of this power structure is where that negotiation occurs.

Known and unknown waterways not only fostered or impeded transportation of imperial agents in North America after their arrival in 1492 but it was also on and by these fluvial lines that Europeans with imperial aspirations began to draw and shape their political boundaries and sought to duplicate the exertion of authority in ways they had done on the European continent. Europeans' experiences with space and governance of space in Europe had formed their idea of how they would exert sovereignty over the North American continent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even earlier than this, in the sixteenth century, from their arrival on ships from Europe, their encounters with the land were consistently formed and shaped in relation to the waterways; the Atlantic Ocean, its shoreline, bays, currents, and whims tossed Europeans along its coast and dictated where they would make landfall.<sup>7</sup> Rivers and inlets led them inward or repelled them away from the interior to remain on the coast; where these waterways were scarce, turbulent or tenuous, so were the ventures and territorial claims of the Europeans. Where water and land cut deep and penetrated west and south, such as St. Lawrence and Mississippi Rivers, into the continent, Europeans were led, and on these shores and from these riverbanks, their outward spread was constantly centered and defined by their relationship to this water. Their aspirations to control and exert sovereignty on the North

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<sup>7</sup> Donald Grant Creighton, *The Empire of the St. Lawrence* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1956), 3.



American continent were inexorably linked to their knowledge and desire to control and make use of the rivers of the continent.

“The St. Lawrence,” wrote David William Smith<sup>8</sup> (1764-1837), the first Surveyor General of Upper Canada, in 1799, “may be classed with the most noble rivers in the world; its waters flow for the extent of 2000 miles before they reach the ocean.”<sup>9</sup> Daniel Macfarlane is a more recent scholar whose also articulates the importance of the St. Lawrence River as a leading protagonist in Canada’s past.<sup>10</sup> He contends that his focus on this waterway specifically “is in keeping with a global, even ancient, tradition of viewing rivers, and water control projects, as the bloodstream of nations on which nationalist obsessions were projected as reflections or repositories of cultural or national character.”<sup>11</sup> Harold Innis also underscored the importance of the St. Lawrence River Valley for the study of the history of what in 1791 was named by the British as Upper Canada. From *The Fur Trade in Canada* to the thoughtful and prescient lectures of his later years that touched on the interconnectivity and communication across the globe, he emphasised the influence of the geographical and pre-Cambrian formations of the St. Lawrence River on the ways people encountered the North American continent.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “Smith” is also spelled “Smyth” in various works. In this project, I have altered all references to him to be “Smith” for clarity; some reference notes will retain the spelling, “Smyth.”

<sup>9</sup> David William Smyth, *A Short Topographical Description of His Majesty’s Province of Upper Canada, in North America* (London: Published by W. Faden, Geographer to His Majesty, and to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, Charing-Cross, 1799), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Donald Grant Creighton, *Dominion of the North: A History of Canada* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1944); Donald Grant Creighton, *The Empire of the St. Lawrence* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1956); Donald Grant Creighton, *The Road to Confederation: The Emergence of Canada, 1863-1867* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965).

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Macfarlane, *Negotiating a River: Canada, the US, and the Creation of the St. Lawrence Seaway* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 14.

<sup>12</sup> Harold Adams Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951), 64, 92; Harold Adams Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto:

Scholars have criticized Innis for his determinism, and his writing style is derided for its passive language, but this critique overlooks the powerful application of his passive language and style of analysis that does much to emphasise the reflexivity of humans' endeavours to geographic realities of their spatial places.<sup>13</sup> This passivity in his writing serves to underline his central argument that even (and perhaps especially) economic histories must be understood in a manner that exposes the factors at work that are external to the human efforts these tales describe. Innis insisted on the "the continued overwhelming importance of water transportation for the development of the interior." He also stressed the importance of remembering how "the course and volume of the waterways in the northeastern half of North America is largely determined by the geological background of the area."<sup>14</sup> These were two factors that, for Innis, were always a central feature of his academic efforts. The geographical realities that influenced these important waterways has had as great an effect on the actions of Europeans in the Americas as did their cultural backgrounds and imperial ideals. This was the case for projects of transportation ostensibly created to enhance trade but also intended to increase territorial and socio-cultural security. In part, however, because of this tension between the imperial purposes of mapping and those of a colonial place, it appears, as Innis astutely observed, that this prioritization of imperial industrial expansion provided

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University of Toronto Press, 1956), 422; Graeme Patterson, *History and Communications: Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, the Interpretation of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Drache, "Celebrating Innis," 30; Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 92.

<sup>14</sup> Harold A. Innis, *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 124.

Canada instead with “an abundance of goods but not the first luxury of security.” Innis insisted that the histories of the post-contact North American world were best understood as “the effect on Europe of the new continent,” instead of attempting to decipher them the other way around.<sup>15</sup> Jody Berland goes so far as to contend that “Innis anticipate[d] the critical interventions of ‘post-colonial geography’ by some fifty years,” specifically in the way he emphasized the “the material practices through which Europe produced a new geography of colonial space.”<sup>16</sup> These histories of the North American continent at the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth are not best understood as tales of heroic explorers and knowledgeable civilisers who tamed an expectant and empty place with expertise imported from Europe, but should be interrogated rather as the intersection of cultures.

### **Representing and Knowing Water**

Water was one of the dominant features and topics of Elizabeth Simcoe’s diary. Seascapes and depictions of water feature both in words and in drawings, and watercolours featured prominently from the beginning of her entries. Water, its power and its mystery, increasingly dominated the narrative. For example, the day before the Simcoes’ September 1791 departure for Québec from Weymouth, she described a storm that moved in: “it blew so heavy a gale, that the *Triton*, the ship on which we are to sail for Canada, was obliged to go out to sea, it being dangerous to remain at anchor.... the

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<sup>15</sup> Innis, *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change*, 316.

<sup>16</sup> Jody Berland, “Space at the Margins: Critical Theory and Colonial Space after Innis,” in *Harold Innis in the New Century: Reflections and Refractions*, eds. William Buxton and Charles Acland (Montréal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), 284.

waves looked tremendous. The scene was grand, but, as the Queen observed this evening, was ‘mixed with too much horror to be pleasing.’<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth was relieved, however, after she dined with the Captain of the *Triton* because he “appears a very gentlemanly man, and his having the reputation of being an excellent officer is a great consolation to us who are about to sail in so late a season for a northern Climate.”<sup>18</sup> For Elizabeth, the Captain’s appearance as a gentleman and her connections with the Queen and King before her departure eased her mind because she was confident in her position as an imperial subject. Gentle and civilised behaviour combined with the fact that the royalty was aware of her journey allayed her fears more effectively than the advice of experienced seamen.<sup>19</sup> While on the transatlantic journey, she wrote of a day at sea: “The waves, rising like mountains, have the grandest and most terrific appearance, and when the ship dashes with violence into the sea, much as a chaise in the act of overturning, it is surprising that she rights again. I viewed this tempestuous scene with astonishment.”<sup>20</sup>

While Elizabeth wrote about all sorts of water she encountered, most significantly it was the St. Lawrence River that dominated and shaped the course of her daily entries. This body of water was one of which she grew increasingly fond. She travelled the river several times during her stay and even on her most arduous journey to Québec City east through the Lachine rapids in the fall of September 1794, during which she was concerned for the safety of herself and her children, she insisted that “going down the St.

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<sup>17</sup> Saturday, 15 October 1791, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 41.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

Lawrence affords the most delightful scenery, whether it be between Kingston and Montreal, among the numberless wooded islands of all sizes, or the woody, rocky shores bordering the rapids, and the transparent clear waters.”<sup>21</sup> Even though all bodies of water seemed to interest her, this was the one that featured most heavily in her writing. It was this river that was “clear” and “transparent,” while other subsidiary rivers, like the Ottawa River, were “pouring its dirty coloured water into the stream of the St. Lawrence.”<sup>22</sup>

This great river mesmerised her, terrified her, and intrigued her, but perhaps most importantly it featured in the ways the colony became known to her. On the Simcoes’ first journey into Upper Canada in 1792, she rode a horse around the Lachine rapids west of Montreal rather than joining the rest of the party in the boat. She observed that this “Grand Rapid, which... continues a mile; the whole of the river foaming like white breakers, and the banks covered with thick woods, is a very fine sight.”<sup>23</sup> Her last journey down the river east to Québec brought no exception to this awe: “I cannot describe how terrifying the extent of furious, dashing white waves appeared,” she wrote, “and how the boat rose and plunged among them, the waves sometimes washing into the boat.”<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth was self-conscious about the emotional tone of her writing about water, openly wondering if it served as a sounding board for her inner state: “These rapids did not appear formidable to me last year. I suppose my mind was then engaged by the cause of

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<sup>21</sup> Tuesday, 23 September 1794, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 257.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>23</sup> Tuesday, 26 June 1792, Elizabeth Simcoe, *Mrs. Simcoe’s Diary*, ed. Mary Quayle Innis (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 2007), 103.

<sup>24</sup> Friday, 29 June 1796, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 345.

my voyage, and the Governor's situation at the Miami; then I thought not of myself; now I had nothing to think of but the present danger, and was terrified." She was relieved to leave "this agitated and agitating scene" when they "came in sight of Point Claire and Isle Perrot" and saw "the junction of the transparent St. Lawrence with the dirty waters of the Ottawa." She was pleased by the "three fine views" this spot afforded: "looking over the immense width of the St. Lawrence, which is like a lake."<sup>25</sup> Her disdain for the surveyors who "do not scruple cutting off a few miles of the river or adding to it" in their maps demonstrates how interested she was in their form and shape, and the knowledge she could possess of them; Elizabeth desired to accurately represent these bodies of water she encountered.<sup>26</sup>

As I will examine further in Chapters Five and Six, John was obsessed with the waterways of Upper Canada. His zeal was matched by Elizabeth's passion for the rivers of the colony. Elizabeth was inspired by their aesthetics but given her focus on the work of her husband and the many maps she sketched of the rivers and their paths for him, her consistent description of these bodies of water is another reflection of the ways her life and work was linked to his. Elizabeth is famous for her watercolours, and of the many paintings for which she is known, all but a few of them are either of the river or ocean or are of the shoreline taken by a perspective on the water itself. Figure 4 is an example of one of those where the landscape frames a mostly empty and vast span of water. The small figures that might be sails of boats are dwarfed not only by the cliff and the tree,

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<sup>25</sup> Friday, 29 June 1796, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 346.

<sup>26</sup> Thursday, 15 March 1792, *Ibid.*, 81.

but also by the wide St. Lawrence River. The water dominates the landscape, and when viewed in the wider context of her writing, the painting reflects both her and John's insistence that waterways were more than lines of communication into and out of the colony's territory; they were the spines on which to build imperial space.



**Figure 4: Elizabeth Simcoe, “A bend in the St. Lawrence River,” (c. 1792).<sup>27</sup>**

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<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Simcoe, “A bend in the St. Lawrence River, c. 1792,” *Watercolour*, Reference Code F 47-11-1-0-39, Archives of Ontario, I0006891.

In Figure 5, the river is again the dominant element of Elizabeth's imaging, only here it is also the object of activity and focus by every figure she depicted in the painting. While it is somewhat difficult to see in this reproduction, both the pilot of the boat and the people on shore are clearly focussed on the water itself; their gaze much like Elizabeth's as the artist. In both Figure 4 and Figure 5, the colonial space is neither vacuous nor unused, but the River is vast and unending. In contrast to the diary where being on and experiencing the water allowed Elizabeth to look out at the colony's topography and to express the insecurity she felt, in the paintings the point-of-view is from the land looking back at the river and the composition reflects a serene and quotidian landscape. Elizabeth sought aesthetically pleasing frames to sketch or to paint, and the river often formed these vistas for her, but so also did the people whom she encountered there.<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 5: Elizabeth Simcoe, “Thousand Islands, 26 July, (c. 1796).”<sup>29</sup>**

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<sup>28</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 91.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Simcoe, “Thousand Islands, 26 July c. 1796,” *Watercolour*, Reference Code F 47-11-1-0-247, Archives of Ontario, I0007099.



## **Water, Boundaries, and Imagining Territory**

The natural barriers created by the rivers and lakes that framed Upper Canada was not unrelated to its sparse population. Gerald Craig reminds us that a plethora of reasons existed for the paucity of white settlers in the Province in 1791, and “not the least of these [reasons] was its island-like situation.” He describes in detail how this geographical reality was created by the Ottawa River which flowed “[a]long its northern side” and he specifically lists the other waterways surrounding it and penetrating it. These included the “great river,” the St. Lawrence. Waterways in the colony that Craig details not only included the “the mammoth cataract in the Niagara River,” but he uses words like “treacherous” and “dangerous” for other water features, and describes the Trent River system to be the “sequence of the world’s most stupendous chain of lakes.”<sup>30</sup> Craig includes these details in the very first page of his work and uses the book’s introduction to emphasise the centrality of water to the shape and form of place. This was a place that was designated “upper” because of its position upstream along the St. Lawrence River in relationship to the other designated colony down the river, one which was “lower” in topography. The central importance of this river was written into the official name of the place even while other rivers flowed along and formed its very border and other fluvial lines were defining features, boons and obstacles of its interior. The reason for this obsession around the waterways of the place, Craig reminds us, is that Upper Canada “would be the Empire’s first inland colony, without an ocean port, since ocean navigation

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<sup>30</sup> Gerald M. Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years 1784-1841*, (London and Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1963), 1.

stopped at Montreal.”<sup>31</sup> The radiation of authority from the imperial centre or core in London spread across the ocean and penetrated into the continent only as far as the knowledge of the imperial mind could travel and where waterways could facilitate its transport.<sup>32</sup> This authority came from the water in myriad ways: communication, supplies, military access, and personal transportation, all of which were best facilitated by sea and river. Where this flow was interrupted, or its path obscured, the imperial authority and claim was similarly tenuous. These were waterways that allowed for boat transport throughout the year, and even facilitated travel by creating roads of ice in winter when the inhospitable terrain of the Canadian Shield hindered land travel.

This kind of action was quite pronounced in the *Québec Act*, 1774. It is a document that delineated boundaries important to an assertion of British Sovereignty over a recently acquired place. The *Québec Act* relied almost entirely upon identified and even unidentified water features to denote its perimeter, yet these descriptions of waterways were so vague that what they illuminate most clearly is not what was known about the colony but what was unknown. Indeed, the *Québec Act* communicated geopolitical desires of British imperial authorities that far outpaced their intimate or concrete understanding of the place. So it was that the *Act* stipulated that the Québec territory would now be composed of “all the Territories, Islands, and Countries in North America, belonging to the Crown of Great Britain, bounded on the South by a Line from

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<sup>31</sup> Craig, *Upper Canada*, (1963), 14.

<sup>32</sup> Amy Turner Bushnell and Jack P. Greene, “Peripheries, Centers, and the Construction of Early Modern American Empires,” in *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, eds. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.

the Bay of Chaleurs, along the High Lands which divide the Rivers that empty themselves into the River St. Lawrence from those which fall into the Sea...”<sup>33</sup> The comprehensive yet imprecise language of “territories, islands and countries,” indicated that the authors of the *Act* were not clear what actually composed the interior of the space they were claiming as theirs. The British categorically, universally, and vaguely proclaimed ownership over any of the rivers that flowed east and those which flowed south within this space they wished to claim. They made these sweeping statements without attempting to identify how many rivers might be present, or even troubling to ascertain their existence at all. What was important to them, and what was explicitly communicated in the official *Act*, was their assumption that the water and its paths that existed would be important conduits through which to exercise their idea of power over this place.

The other side of Québec’s boundary as defined in the *Act* included the measurement of “forty-five Degrees of Northern Latitude on the Eastern Bank of the River Connecticut keeping the same Latitude directly West.” Perhaps the most stunning admission of ignorance of the place was in the following passage, where the authors explicitly included a contingency for the border because its specifics were as yet unknown:

from thence along the said Northern and Western Boundaries of the said Province, until the said Western Boundary strike the Ohio: *But in case the said Bank of the said Lake shall not be found to be so intersected*, then following the said Bank until it shall arrive at that Point of the said Bank which shall be nearest to the North-western Angle of the said Province of Pennsylvania [*sic*], and thence by a right

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<sup>33</sup> 14 George III, “The Québec Act, 1774” (c. 83 (U.K.)).

Line, to the said North-western Angle of the said Province; and thence along the Western Boundary of the said Province, until it strike the River Ohio; and along the Bank of the said River, Westward, to the Banks of the Mississippi.<sup>34</sup>

In this seismic and historically weighty document, the lack of physical or territorial knowledge of this imperial space was written into the *Québec Act* itself. A contingent boundary was included “in case” their eventual and prefigured knowledge of the place through future surveying would prove to be insufficient to produce this kind of geopolitical territorial boundary. The identification of specific geographic lines based on those “known” waterways speaks to the central place these rivers held in the creation of knowledge and their position of importance for transportation across the continent. The space in-between the rivers, this imperial territory, could only be claimed in and by these European minds because of their belief that these rivers themselves would ultimately be traversed, surveyed, measured, mapped, and known.

This heavy reliance upon water to denote territory and define the place remains today in the boundary between present day Québec and Ontario where the Ottawa River itself traces the line. The *Constitutional Act*, the document that served to split the colony in jurisdiction in 1791, however, does not contain any geographic specifics at all.<sup>35</sup> This silence regarding geographic references is nearly deafening when compared alongside its predecessor, the *Québec Act*, a text that is full of geographic references. The designation of the Ottawa River to be the boundary between these Upper and Lower Canada was proposed by Lord Dorchester (1724-1808), Governor-in-Chief of British North America,

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<sup>34</sup> 14 George III, “The Québec Act, 1774” (c. 83 (U.K.)). Emphasis mine.

<sup>35</sup> 31 Geo. III, “The Constitutional Act, 1791” (c. 31 (U.K.)).

in a letter to The Right Honourable Lord Sydney (1733-1800), the Leader of the House of Lords at the time. He offered this suggestion in 1788 in his reply to Sydney's query as to Dorchester's opinion regarding the possibility of the division of the province. Even though Dorchester did not advise the division of the province, he did proffer his opinion "that no time should be lost in appointing a person of fidelity and ability in the confidence of the Loyalists, to superintend, and lead them, and to bring their concerns with dispatch to the knowledge of the government, under the title of Lieutenant Governor."<sup>36</sup> Dorchester wished for the place to have some kind of leadership, even though he would have preferred that the entire territory should stay under one moniker and under one governance (presently, under his jurisdiction) in North America. However, he did include the requested "Proposed Line of Division" which he suggested might

commence at a stone boundary on the north bank of the Lake St. Francis, at the cove west of pointe au Bodet, in the limit between the township of Lancaster, and the seigneurie of New Longueuil, running along the said limit in the direction of North thirty four degrees west, to the westernmost angle of the said seigneurie of New Longueuil, thence along the north western boundary of the seigneurie of Vaudreuil running north twenty five degrees east, until it strikes the Ottawas [*sic*] River, to ascend the said river into the lake Témiscamingue, and from the head of the said lake by a line drawn due north until it strikes the boundary line of Hudson's bay, including all the territory to the westward and southward of the said line to the utmost extent of the country commonly called or known by the name of Canada.<sup>37</sup>

As in the *Québec Act*, these boundaries he wished to codify were marked, defined, and composed largely of waterways. A river, a lake, and even a cove

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<sup>36</sup> Dorchester to Sydney, No. 94, Québec, 8 November 1788, Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, eds., *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 1759-1791*, Vol. 1 (Ottawa: Printed by S. E. Dawson, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1907), 655.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 656.

composed the markers that Dorchester included.

The contested definition and demarcation of the Province and explicitly the lack of concrete knowledge around its form eventually led to the complete omission of any kind of reference to physical geography or a specific border from the final *Constitutional Act*. Grenville sent a preliminary draft of the *Constitutional Act* to Dorchester and informed him that “With respect to the intended Boundaries of these Provinces a blank is left in the Bill in order that your Lordship may, with the assistance of the Surveyor General, who is now in Québec, consider of such a description of those Boundaries as may be sufficiently intelligible and certain, so as to leave no room for future difficulties on that subject.” He intimated that “The division between the two Provinces is meant to be the same as is mentioned to your Lordship in Lord Sydney’s Letter of 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1788, with the alteration suggested by your Lordship in your Letter of the 8<sup>th</sup> November following.” He admitted that “There will however be a considerable difficulty in the mode of describing the Boundary between the District of Upper Canada and the Territories of the United States,” because “As the adhering to the Line mentioned in the Treaty with America would exclude the Posts which are still in His Majesty’s Possession, and which the infraction of the Treaty on the part of America has induced His Majesty to retain....” Grenville went so far as to explicitly suggest that in its final iteration the geographic details of the border in the *Constitutional Act* should be left intentionally vague. “Possibly the best solution for this difficulty might be to describe the Upper District by some general words such as ‘All the Territories &c. &c. &c. possessed by and subject to His Majesty, and being to the West or South West of the Boundary Line of

Lower Canada, except such as are included within the present Boundaries of the Government of New Brunswick.”<sup>38</sup> The ambiguity and open-ended wording were intentional; the final document carefully excluded explicit knowledge and was intended to conceal vacuums of knowledge.

The draft constitution he included for Dorchester’s perusal read as follows, with these exact uses of ellipses: “And it be Enacted, That the Boundaries of the Province of Upper Canada shall be as follows, that is to say,... And it be Enacted, That the Boundaries of the Province of Lower Canada shall be as follows, that is to say, ...”<sup>39</sup> The second draft that Grenville passed on to Dorchester included the boundaries he had previously requested from him.

Upper Canada’s other borders to the west and north remained ambiguous even years later, as the Duke La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt (1747-1827) eloquently described in the late 1790s after Lieutenant Governor Simcoe had been in his role in the colony for years. He wrote that Upper Canada’s “western boundary being undefined, it comprises all the known and unknown countries, extending as far as the Pacific or Great Sea, and is bounded northwards also by unknown countries.”<sup>40</sup> For the nascent settlement taking form in the newly divided Province of Upper Canada, the dearth of knowledge of this space defined imperial objectives as strongly as did its desire to govern the people, newly

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<sup>38</sup> Grenville to Dorchester, No. 2, Whitehall, 20 October 1789, Shortt and Doughty, *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada*, 1: 663–664.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> François-Alexandre-Frédéric La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797: With an Authentic Account of Lower Canada*, ed. Henry Neuman (London: Printed for R. Phillips, no. 71, St. Paul’s Church-Yard, by T. Davison, Lombard-Street, Fleet-Street, 1799), 228.

arrived and already present, who lived there. The pools and veins of the water in North America for imperial agents facilitated the spread and stretch of an imperial desire and expansion of governmentality and power over territory.

Ultimately, the codified 1791 *Constitutional Act* included no specific description of any kind of physical boundary or geographic reference points at all. Section II called only for the division of the two separate provinces and for the appointment at the King's wish of a Lieutenant Governor.<sup>41</sup> Gerald Craig points out the intention behind this omission, because

The *Act* itself did not affect a complete repeal of the *Québec Act*, nor did it divide the province. Only those parts of the *Québec Act* related to the appointment and powers of the Council were superseded, while the *Act* noted that division would be accomplished by executive action. The latter course was adopted in order to avoid public discussion of the exact boundaries of the two provinces, a subject which could be embarrassing as long as Great Britain retained the posts on the American side of the Great Lakes.<sup>42</sup>

From the moment the geographical imagining of Upper Canada was formally expressed in writing on paper, imperial agents who sought the division of the colony assumed that the Ottawa River would be a part of this boundary. For those who drafted and codified the *Constitutional Act* this was a document that would allow for the division of the place into two provinces. There would be two governmental distinctions where there had been only one and this newly minted Province required a Lieutenant Governor.

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<sup>41</sup> 31 Geo. III, "The Constitutional Act, 1791."

<sup>42</sup> Craig, *Upper Canada* (1963), 18.



## Imperial Networks of Power

Upper Canada at its inception in 1791 was a specific focus for the British Empire during its global imperial expansion. It was a Province that existed on paper, because of the ways that the communication of its essence on paper could translate across distances. Its being was formed through an Act passed in Parliament by a group of men of whom few had ever—or ever intended to—physically inhabit the place in question.<sup>43</sup> The Province existed most corporeally in the minds and intents of British imperial actors bent on its reality, yet its boundaries, its territory, its scope, and its contents were ill-defined to its creators, to many of its inhabitants, and to its neighbours. Its conception was predicated upon the desire that the British Empire had to possess a place for its Loyalists displaced by the conflict in the South to reside, to re-settle, and to continue to be loyal to Empire. Its formation in this way (that is, on paper), underscored an imperial intent, an idea, an epistemology of space and being whose essence was largely theoretical. Upper Canada was being constructed. Not only this, but it had to be constructed by and on paper because its existence was an imperial idea rather than a concrete topological reality. Its construction was multipurpose and worked towards a specific imperial intent that was necessary because it was not a truly vacant space. It was both occupied and known but it was also vacant and unknown. The imperial knowledge that existed of this space, however, was not complete enough in its scope to afford the vast extension of imperial sovereignty the British Empire desired to project over this territory. Other kinds of

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<sup>43</sup> Duncan Campbell Scott, *John Graves Simcoe*, Vol. VII, *The Makers of Canada* (Toronto: Morang & Co., 1909), 12.

epistemologies in this place were antithetical to the British project. The space was not vacant, but it was not yet populated with the kind of population that the Empire desired to inhabit it. This created specific challenges for John Simcoe, but these challenges were not unique to him or to Upper Canada; these were the kinds of impediments that existed in places where the British and other imperial actors sought to expand their reach and assert their Empire beyond their nucleic spheres.

The process of appointment for the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada from 1788 until the actual appointment in 1792, exposed some of the awkward in-between position, geographically and politically, that the St. Lawrence River valley held after the Revolutionary War. Even though its remaining North American colonies were centrally important to the British Empire, a significant number of imperial resources were extended instead across the globe to places like India and the West Indies.<sup>44</sup> Imperial officials considering the formation of Upper Canada explicitly discussed their reservations in endowing the colony with too much autonomy or with any kind of self-governing potential.<sup>45</sup> Its population included people whose lives were shaped and forever changed by the civil war that occurred during their lifetimes. These were persons loyal to the British Empire but their loyalty and where their future irrevocably lay was in the “new” world, on the North American continent. As John Simcoe explained in a 1793

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<sup>44</sup> J. A. Lovat-Fraser, *Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1916); Henry Dundas and H. D. Melville, *Memoirs of the Right Honorable Henry Dundas, Lord Viscount Melville, Etc* (London: Lewis & Roden, 1805); Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

<sup>45</sup> Lord Thurlow to W. W. Grenville, 10 September 1789, Brigadier General E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada*, Vol. 1; 1789–1793 (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), 4–5.

letter to Alured Clarke (1745-1832) the Lieutenant Governor of Lower Canada, his opinion of the government of the Thirteen Colonies to the South was that of a “wild and phrenetic democracy.”<sup>46</sup> John advocated that the structures that were to be put into place in the new colony of Upper Canada must avoid local entrenchments or a weak monarchical tie; they must be stronger and more aristocratic than the flawed and failed system in the thirteen colonies.<sup>47</sup>

W. W. Grenville wrote to Dorchester explaining to him the qualifications for Upper Canadian government contained in the *Constitutional Act*:

The Object of these regulations is both to give to the Upper branch of the Legislature a greater degree of weight and consequence than was possessed by the Councils in the Old Colonial Governments, and to establish in the Provinces a Body of Men having that motive of attachment to the existing form of Government, which arises from the possession of personal or hereditary distinction.

He wrote of his desire for Dorchester to help him to select men for this Upper branch from among “the Individuals who compose the higher classes of the Community” whom he considered to be “fit objects of the King’s favor in this respect.”<sup>48</sup> Dorchester responded in kind. He acknowledged that even though

Many advantages might result from an hereditary Legislative Council... the fluctuating state of Property in these Provinces would expose all hereditary honors to fall into disregard; for the present therefore it would seem more advisable to appoint the members during life, good behaviour, and residence in the province.... To give them as much consequence as possible, in the present condition of the Province, they should be selected from among the mend of property, where talents,

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<sup>46</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Alured Clarke, Navy Hall, 5 April 1793, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 309–310.

<sup>47</sup> Craig, *Upper Canada* (1963), 14.

<sup>48</sup> Grenville to Dorchester, No. 2, Whitehall, 20 October 1789, Shortt and Doughty, *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada*, 663–666.

integrity, and a firm attachment to the Unity of the Empire may be found.<sup>49</sup>

The *Constitutional Act* did not merely ensure that the Loyalists arriving from the South had a space to occupy and to separate the interests of these people of British descent from the established province of Québec, but also, importantly, it was intended to solidify its position as a loyal colony within the Empire. By extension, the population created by this *Act* was necessarily a colonial population, one subjugated to the Empire. The *Act* provided for the appointment of a:

Governor, or Lieutenant Governor, of such Province, or by such Person as his Majesty, his Heirs and Successors, shall from Time to Time appoint to administer the Government within the same, shall be, and the same are hereby declared to be, by virtue of and under the Authority of this Act, valid and binding to all Intents and Purposes whatever, within the Province in which the same shall have been so passed.<sup>50</sup>

Here and in other correspondence and legislation the moniker, “Province,” is used frequently to describe Upper Canada. What exactly these imperial agents meant by this term, however, is less than clear. Certainly, there was not a specific or clearly defined area with “known” boundaries or even a region that was governable in 1791. The use of the term “Province” demonstrated tellingly the intent for the place by these men. It was, however, a poor descriptor of the actual place about which so little was actually known of its geography or territory and of which its governance was at best tenuous and certainly incomplete.

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<sup>49</sup> Dorchester to Grenville, No. 15, Québec, 8 February 1790, Shortt and Doughty, *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada*, 674–76.

<sup>50</sup> 31 Geo. III, “The Constitutional Act, 1791.”

The intensely local and partial knowledge the Empire possessed of this “Province” of Upper Canada in 1791 directly impacted the process of appointing its first Lieutenant Governor. Any appointee would be subordinate to the Governor General of Canada, Lord Dorchester, in Québec, yet the initial appointment was out of his control and was in the hands of the Home Secretaries, W. W. Grenville and his successor, Henry Dundas. Writing about this historical moment of dividing the colony and creating a Province for its loyal refugees, Craig contends that “[i]n all this there was no assurance that they would remain loyal and faithful dependencies of the mother country, for it seemed to be the fate of ‘so great & distant a dominion’ to fall away eventually.”<sup>51</sup> This assumes a kind of nation-on-its-way, even if Craig’s work as a whole avoids this assumption more broadly. His argument to support this claim is that if the imperial objective was for that of “complete control of colonies... no legislature of any sort would be permitted, an approach that was neither desirable nor possible.” Instead, he concludes that the goal was, quoting Grenville, to prevent “the growth of a republican or independent spirit” while also acknowledging that democratic government institutions were inevitable.<sup>52</sup> This kind of conclusion may have been obvious from Craig’s vantage point in 1963, but it was not represented in the late-eighteenth-century correspondence around the kind of government that would be established. The competition over the

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<sup>51</sup> Craig, *Upper Canada* (1963), 15.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

position for Lieutenant Governor and the appointment of a man from Britain rather the selection of a North American resident was no coincidence.

The recent loss of the Thirteen Colonies to the South was the most poignant aspect of the creation of this new Province, and the men who applied for the position of its first Lieutenant Governor understood this and explicitly linked their suitability for the job to their experience with this devastating loss. Among those who applied for the position was Chief Justice William Smith (1728-1793). Smith was born in New York and was a prolific author there who was at one time regarded as the foremost historian of New York.<sup>53</sup> He was a prominent figure in the American colonies, and was described by John Adams in his diary in 1774 as having “the character of a great lawyer, a sensible and learned man, and yet a consistent, unshaken friend to his country and her liberties.” Adams went on to describe Smith’s “account of his negotiating... in the year 1765, when the people attacked the fort to obtain the stamped papers, in which he acted an intrepid, an honest, and a prudent part.”<sup>54</sup> Adams sought Smith’s opinion regarding the appointment of an acquaintance of his to the Governorship of Massachusetts, and Smith offered his frank opinion in return. By 1776, however, Smith refused to align himself with the new American state and eventually evacuated New York in 1783 on the same British ship as Guy Carleton. Carleton was successful in his application to have Smith

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<sup>53</sup> L. F. S. Upton, “Smith, William (1728-93),” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, Montréal: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1979), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith\\_william\\_1728\\_93\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith_william_1728_93_4E.html); William Smith, *The History of the Province of New-York, from the First Discovery* (London: Printed for J. Almon, 1776).

<sup>54</sup> John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States, With a Life of Author, Notes and Illustrations.*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1850), 353-354.

accompany him to his new post as Governor of Québec, but Smith's appointment as Chief Justice was not without its skeptics, largely because of Smith's significant ties to New York—although historian William Wood in 1916 claimed that Smith was “a very ardent loyalist.”<sup>55</sup> At the request of Lord Dorchester, Smith wrote a letter to Grenville in 1790, commenting upon one of the drafts of the *Constitutional Act*; Smith offered his approbation of the second draft, positing that it would most

assuredly lay a foundation for two spacious populous and flourishing Provinces, and for more to grow out of them; and compose, at no remote period, a mass of Power very worthy of immediate attention. I miss in it however, the expected Establishment to put what remains to Great Britain of Her Antient Dominions in North America, under one general direction, for the united interest and safety of every Branch of Empire.

He reminded his readers that only a few decades previous, “The Colonies of England were flourishing Colonies,” and following the Revolutionary War, he identified himself amongst those for whom this revolt was unthinkable. He wrote of his aversion “to share in the Burdens and Miseries of the Revolted Colonies, and by the growing Discernment [*sic*],” and concluded from this experience to the South “that our safety and Prosperity is only to be found in the Commerce and Arms of Great Britain.” He conveyed in the strongest of terms his loyalty to the Empire:

my mind is therefore carried, under such an Administration as the present one, into a strong Persuasion, that nothing will be neglected to enable Great Britain, so to serve herself of that Power, she already possesses here, as to check any Councils to be meditated to her Detriment, by the new Nation she has consented to create... I could not repress what I owed to the vindication of my Zeal, in the sacrifice of my fortune for the British Interest, and as I think still for the best Interests

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<sup>55</sup> William Wood, *The Father of British Canada: A Chronicle of Carleton, Makers of Canada* 12 (Toronto: Glasgow: Brook, 1916), 217.

too of the Country of my Birth. Most of all I owed it to my Sovereign, in whose Grace I found a Relief at the end of the Storm.<sup>56</sup>

Smith wished to leave no doubt as to his belief in the triumph of the British Empire in North America and also in the success of these governments once they would be set forward in the *Constitutional Act*. It is plain as well, that his experience with the Revolutionary War was one of great travail. He asserted proof of his “Zeal” and “sacrifice of...fortune” and his desire for “the best Interests... of the Country of my Birth” and through this “Storm” he reminded his readers that he remained loyal to a specific kind of idea of British authority in North America and to his “Sovereign.” Smith specifically sought to position himself as a loyal purveyor of the right kind of local assertions of authority in the colonies; he went so far as to include his genealogy to emphasise where his loyalties lay. Smith was born in New York City, yet laid claim to Britain as “the Country of my Birth.”<sup>57</sup> Smith assumed his application was stronger because he could detail the great personal sacrifices he had made to remain loyal to the Crown.

John Graves Simcoe also expressed his interest in the position. Not only did he promote his qualifications by enumerating his previous experiences and qualities, but equally important in his supplications were his expressions of loyalty to Empire and the need for the new colony to be firmly, unequivocally, British. His interest in Upper Canada, he stressed, was to retain for the Empire its North American holdings. “I would

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<sup>56</sup> Chief Justice Smith to Dorchester, Copy, Québec, 5 February 1790, in Shortt and Doughty, *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada*, 1:685–87.

<sup>57</sup> Upton, “Smith, William.”



die by more than Indian torture,” he wrote, “to restore my King and his Family to their just Inheritance and to give my Country that fair and natural accession of Power which an Union with their Brethren could not fail to bestow and render permanent.”<sup>58</sup> John had participated in the Revolutionary War and fought alongside the Queen’s Rangers in New York.<sup>59</sup> He felt keenly the loss of the Thirteen Colonies, and for Upper Canada he sought to establish, “a free, honourable British Government and a pure Administration of its Laws.” He expanded on this, saying that “There are inherent Defects in the Congressional form of Government, the absolute prohibition of an order of Nobility is a glaring one.”<sup>60</sup> Central to his application was his explicit explanation that he was not interested in building a life there but instead desired to preside over a colony within the British Empire. For John, this idea of an attachment to Empire, a specific kind of loyalty, was crucial to executing well the position of Lieutenant Governor. As John wrote to Evan Nepean of his rival for the position, “Mr. Smith, who [*sic*] I believe to be in Office in Canada, a life of loyalty and every good wish to the Government of this Country in Church and State,” might not make for an effective Lieutenant Governor specifically because of his already significant ties to the place. John wrote that Smith’s

Brother [was] a notorious Rebel during the late War, having purchased a large tract of the land, and settled it within those limits, where New York claims proprietorship and Vermont obedience: his, Mr. Smith’s Opinions should be examined with caution and the utmost scrupulousness on any point in which Vermont or New York may

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<sup>58</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Sir Joseph Banks, Bart. President of the Royal Society, 8 January 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:17–19.

<sup>59</sup> John Graves Simcoe, *A Journal of the Operations of the Queen’s Rangers: From the End of the Year 1777, to the Conclusion of the late American War* (England: Exeter, 1789).

<sup>60</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Sir Joseph Banks, Bart. President of the Royal Society, 8 January 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:17–19.

interfere with Canada. I am clearly of Opinion that Government should act by America as it has done in the past, and appoint to its Superintendency one of the most respectable of our Nobility.<sup>61</sup>

Although Smith explicitly exhibited what John acknowledged to be a form of “loyalty,” John also emphasised that the proper person to hold this position would be someone who would uphold and enshrine British ideals of governance. This begs the question of what loyalty to Empire looked like and how it could be identified, applied, demonstrated, or defended. The second, and not insignificant, mark against Smith’s appointment was also his connection to a brother who was described by John as both a landholder in the south and a “Rebel.” John used Smith’s brother’s occupation and residence to create suspicion around his rival’s own loyalties and possible future opinions and actions.

John was not ill advised to phrase his own application in such a manner nor to compare his own loyalty to those other kinds of loyalties that his competitors for the position might possess. Correspondence between Lord Dorchester and officials in the Home Office during the selection process for the position revealed the importance these men placed on having a governor with strong imperial ties and, perhaps as important, one without significant colonial connections, appointed to the nascent province. These two kinds of connections were incompatible in the minds of those imperialists bent on establishing Upper Canada, and the absence of one was as important as the presence of the other. Alan Lester describes how important what he terms “network infrastructures” were to upholding and perpetuating the possibility of the British Empire across the globe.

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<sup>61</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Evan Nepean, Wolford Lodge, 3 December 1789, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 9.

He argues that during the time when John was appointed Lieutenant Governor in Upper Canada, these “colonial and metropolitan sites were articulated discursively as well as materially, and through the same kinds of network infrastructure that serviced a global commerce.” Colonial sites, he reminds us, were part of an “imperial network” whose locally “differentiated knowledges were connected by the communicative circuits of Empire.”<sup>62</sup> For Lester, these are the forms of culture, and were powerful forms of “contingent power relations” composed of “congeries of values [and] beliefs... that have come to carry the force of nature.”<sup>63</sup> Rather than viewing structures of Empire and power relationships between 1760-1860 as a social hierarchy or a class structure, Lester argues that culture “is the very medium through which social relations are expressed, experienced and contested. And these social relations consist of far more intricate intermeshings of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, language and locality than those that a class-based analysis alone can supply.”<sup>64</sup> The loyalties that John possessed, but more significantly his connections within the imperial “network,” and even to his well-connected wife, were paramount to his successful application.

Lord Dorchester conveyed his opinion that Sir John Johnson who at the time held the august title of the “Superintendent General and Inspector General of the Six Nations Indians and those in the Province of Québec,” should receive the position of Lieutenant Governor of what might become Upper Canada. Dorchester was not alone in his view

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<sup>62</sup> Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), 6.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

that Sir John Johnson was the most obvious choice for this position. Johnson had spearheaded the 1785 *Petition of Sir John Johnson and Loyalists*, that the creation of a Province for the other Loyalists and for himself. Johnson and his co-signers supplicated for their cause, presenting the argument that they had

the strongest Grounds to hope for such an exempt Jurisdiction as they ask for; They were born British Subjects, and have ever been accustomed to the Government and Laws of England. It was to restore that Government, and to be restored to those Laws, for which from Husbandmen they became Soldiers, animated with the Hope...that should they fail in their Attempts to recover their former Habitations by a Restoration of Your Majesty's Government, they would still find a Resource in some Parts of the British Dominions, where thy might enjoy the Blessings of British Laws and of the British Government.<sup>65</sup>

The petition proposed that the “Territory shall be subdivided into small Districts... Cataraqui [Kingston] being the Metropolis,” and sought for this division “that the Blessings of the British Laws and of the British Government, and an exemption from the Tenures, may be extended to the aforesaid Settlements.”<sup>66</sup> Johnson was an unquestioned leader among the Loyalists. This was due in part to his father's lengthy military career and subsequent appointment as “Superintendent of Northern Indians” in British North America. Sir John Johnson inherited his father's title and built on his reputation within the newly arrived population in what would become Kingston following the secession of the thirteen colonies to the South. Dorchester saw Johnson as an obvious choice for the man to become the first Lieutenant Governor of the Province for whose creation Johnson

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<sup>65</sup> Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, eds., “Petition of Sir John Johnson and Loyalists (1783),” in *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada*, 1: 524-527, 524-525.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 527.

had personally advocated.<sup>67</sup>

Dorchester wrote to the Home Office emphatically supporting the appointment of Sir John Johnson, even going so far as to propose a replacement for Johnson's current position as Indian Agent that he assumed would be vacated as soon as Johnson was appointed to the position based on his recommendation. Dorchester viewed Johnson's abilities, but especially his connections and home within the colony, as assets that qualified him specifically for the position. He wrote to W. W. Grenville that Johnson's, "intimate knowledge of the Principal characters of [Upper Canada] renders him Particularly competent to such a discrimination." For Dorchester, Johnson's loyalty, the right kind of attachment to the Empire, was not in question. He described Johnson's "zeal and fidelity in the King's service from the first beginning of the late war," and concluded by detailing the reasons he made the best kind of candidate. Among these were "the sacrifice of a very considerable Property, and the advantage of a high degree of confidence among those Loyalists, will Point him out to His Majesty as the Properest Person for the Government of Upper Canada."<sup>68</sup> Dorchester sent along with this recommendation a list of names of men he considered viable for the legislative and executive councils of the legislature of the new province, a list that John Johnson had helped to draft. For the position of Lieutenant Governor, however, he included only one

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<sup>67</sup> G. P. Browne, "Carleton, Guy, 1st Baron Dorchester," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1983), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/carleton\\_guy\\_5E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/carleton_guy_5E.html); Julian Gwyn, "Johnson, Sir William," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1985), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/johnson\\_william\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/johnson_william_4E.html); Earle Thomas, "Johnson, Sir John," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/johnson\\_john\\_6E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/johnson_john_6E.html).

<sup>68</sup> Lord Dorchester to W. W. Grenville, No. 20., Québec, 15 March 1790, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:10.

name that he saw as suitable for the position: Sir John Johnson.

Not only had King George III already appointed John Simcoe to this position by the time Grenville even received Dorchester's recommendation, but Grenville responded explicitly and thoroughly to Dorchester's recommendation of Johnson in June of 1790, leaving no ambiguity about its finality or the reasons why they had come to this decision. In correspondence labeled "Private and Confidential," Grenville wrote to Dorchester of John Simcoe's selection to the position that he had "not overlooked the situation and services of Sir John Johnson, but motives of very considerable weight in my opinion induced me to think that the nomination of a person belonging to that Province, and possessing such a large property in it, was not desirable, especially in the formation of the new Government."<sup>69</sup>

It was specifically Johnson's connection to the place, to the land itself, which created an impediment for his nomination. It was Johnson's "belonging" and "possessing" that for Grenville and other imperial agents were problematic. Grenville explained that "The disadvantage to His Majesty's service which might be expected from the effect of local habits, connections, and interests appear to me to be more than sufficient to counterbalance those benefits which may be stated as arising from the same circumstances." Grenville believed that Johnson's interests and connections were too local. Never was Johnson's "loyalty" to the British Empire questioned, but his connections specifically to North America were considerable and like his father he had

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<sup>69</sup> W. W. Grenville to Lord Dorchester, (Private and Confidential), Whitehall, 3 June 1790, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793, 13.

significant personal ties to the continent.<sup>70</sup> His father's Mohawk wife, Gonwatsijayenni Koñwatsi'tsiaiéñni (c. 1736-1796), often called "Mary Brant," was deeply influential in Six Nations' leadership following the war. A biographer of hers describes her as a woman who "remained fiercely loyal to her family and to the memory of Sir William and bitter towards the American rebels, who had driven her and her people from their homeland."<sup>71</sup> General Haldimand had settled Mary Brant near to her stepson, John Johnson, in Kingston with a pension following her significant leadership and aid during and following the Revolutionary War. He was intimately connected to people and places on the North American continent. Johnson was too linked to local interests that might eventually be at odds with imperial desires for the position of the colony to the Empire. The new Province of Upper Canada was not an infant state: its formation and the intent behind its formation were that it would be a colony. In case there was any kind of doubt as to the permanence and finality of this censure of Johnson, Grenville closed his letter by writing,

I mention this more particularly to Your Lordship because it is uncertain whether, in the event of hostilities with Spain, Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe may not be employed on some different service, and because even in that event I think it right to apprize Your Lordship that great objections would, in my opinion subsist against naming Sir John Johnson. I have no positive information how far Sir John Johnson has been induced to look to this object, nor what his probable line of conduct would be in case of disappointment. Your Lordship will, of course, see that it is very material for me to receive confidentially your opinion on this point, on account of the great embarrassment which might be thrown in the way of Government at its first outset in the new

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<sup>70</sup> Gwyn, "Johnson, Sir William."

<sup>71</sup> Barbara Graymont, "Koñwatsi'tsiaiéñni, Gonwatsijayenni (Molly Brant)," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1979), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/konwatsitsiaienni\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/konwatsitsiaienni_4E.html).

Province, if all the members of the Legislative Council were appointed at the recommendation of any person, however distinguished in point of situation or services, who was not cordially and sincerely disposed to co-operation with the King's representative.<sup>72</sup>

Those in the Home Office saw John Simcoe as firmly a man of Empire and free of local complications. Grenville indicated in the letter that the Empire might have need for him elsewhere; it was not specifically in Upper Canada that his talents might be invested.

Craig vividly describes the debate that occurred in the British Parliament over this *Constitutional Act* in 1791. For the Opposition, Charles James Fox

urged that the government of Canada had to be constructed on very different foundations from those that might be suitable in other colonies, such as the West Indian islands. This government had to serve a growing European population, living next door to the independent American states. Under these circumstances nothing must be done to make the inhabitants of Canada feel that their situation was worse than their neighbours'; all possible causes of envy must be avoided.<sup>73</sup>

Fox objected most strongly to Grenville and Sydney's plans to create this aristocratic structure, its hereditary council, and their insistence that its strength would come through separation from French Canada. Craig writes that Pitt was not impressed by this argument and reminded Fox, "that the whole purpose of the new constitution was to provide a close approximation to the British model."<sup>74</sup> John Simcoe's plans to create a little Britain out of Upper Canada fit directly within greater imperial aspirations. To Dundas, he wrote "that the utmost Attention should be paid that British Customs, Manners, & Principles in the most trivial as well as serious matters should be promoted & inculcated to obtain their

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<sup>72</sup> W. W. Grenville to Lord Dorchester, (Private and Confidential), Whitehall, 3 June 1790, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:13.

<sup>73</sup> Craig, *Upper Canada* (1963), 17.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*



true Ascendancy to assimilate the Colony with the parent state & to bear insensibly all their habitual Influence in the Support of that British Constitution.”<sup>75</sup>

John’s interchangeability within the Empire was as valuable to the Home Office as were his military qualifications, experience, and familiarity with the North American continent. The very reality that the Empire could make use of him in Spain or in North America made him ideal to hold this position. Conversely, it was Johnson’s relationship with the place and his local investment in it that made him a candidate whom the Home Office could not seriously consider.<sup>76</sup> Johnson’s position both geographically in Upper Canada and more specifically relationally within the Empire was not imperial enough; it was not detached enough for the purposes of the kind of colony that Upper Canada was to be. There was no desire on the part of any of the imperial actors to increase political autonomy or to create a self-governing colony; it was, after all, this kind of colonial arrangement that had proved so disastrous to the south.

John was certainly a valuable asset to the Home Office and they explicitly indicated that he would be a viable candidate to be appointed to any number of roles across the expanding Empire. His connection to his wife, Elizabeth, was never mentioned in the published works by Cruikshank nor noted in the collected correspondence in the Archives of Canada, but it does not seem improbable to infer that his connection to her only served to strengthen his “imperial network.” She was cultured. She had an auspicious lineage. She had purchased for them an estate that offered them distinction

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<sup>75</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Hon. Henry Dundas, London, 30 June 1791, E. A. Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 27.

<sup>76</sup> A. G. Bradley, *Lord Dorchester*, Vol. V, *The Makers of Canada* (Toronto: Morang & Co., 1909), 258.

and esteem. Her pedigree was central to her biographer, J. Ross Robertson's claim of her role as a mother-figure for a white notion of what Canadian civilisation was to be. He took great lengths to list her family tree explicitly in his work.<sup>77</sup> Like John's father, Elizabeth's father had participated in previous British imperial inroads in North America. Robertson explained:

Her father was an officer in the army, attaining the rank of colonel a few years before his death. He served in Canada and was one of the three Majors of Brigade of General Wolfe at Québec in 1759, and died in 1766 while his regiment was stationed at Gibraltar... The Gwillims came of noble lineage... the genealogy being traceable to a straight line from the early kings of North and South Wales.<sup>78</sup>

This claim of Elizabeth Simcoe's status as mother-of-nation was specifically poignant for an idea of Canadian nationalism that was present in 1911 when Robertson published this book.<sup>79</sup> Not only was Elizabeth white and civilised but, more importantly for Robertson at this time, she was Anglophone. The reminder of her father's presence with General Wolfe in 1759 at the fall of Québec was an important component of her place in Canada's past. This is a powerful mnemonic device that Robertson employed. Pierre Nora describes this kind of narration as the desire for "a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth."<sup>80</sup> In order for Robertson's view of a kind of white, Anglo-Canadian narrative present and future to continue as a Canadian ideal, he was

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<sup>77</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 10.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 33–34.

<sup>79</sup> H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary*, (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1999), iii.

<sup>80</sup> Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26, no. 1 (1989): 8.

anxious to link Elizabeth to a desired single event of Québec's defeat that he portrayed as complete and totalising. This narrative spoke of Robertson's desire for her to embody the maternal role in a natal story for a specific kind of Canadian nation in the making: a single and triumphant English Canada.

Robertson dedicated the first seven pages of his reproduction of Elizabeth's "diary" to elaborating on her august heritage. Robertson not only established Elizabeth's noble descent but also the ties she had to the North American continent through her father. Of John, Robertson lamented that his heritage was more difficult to trace and indeed he recognised that it was questionable in its sources. What he could laud was the bravery and reputation of John's father, but any other ancestors were dim and shadowy and this clearly caused him some anguish as he sought to trace a noble heritage for both of the Simcoes.<sup>81</sup> Robertson's idea of Elizabeth's role as adjudicator of a specific kind of civilisation has also been borne out in other representations of Elizabeth written since 1911.<sup>82</sup> What was clear to Robertson, and what he emphasised throughout his book, was that Elizabeth was civilised. Her actions towards the province moved it from wilderness

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<sup>81</sup> J. Ross Robertson, *The History of Freemasonry in Canada, from Its Introduction in 1749; Compiled and Written from Official Records and from Mss. Covering the Period 1749-1858, in the Possession of the Author* (Toronto: G.N. Morang, 1900), 12–15.

<sup>82</sup> John M. Bassett, *Elizabeth Simcoe, First Lady of Upper Canada* (Don Mills, Ont.: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1974); Helen M. Buss, *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women's Autobiography in English* (Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada: 1790-1840* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995); Marian Fowler, *The Embroidered Tent: Five Gentlewomen in Early Canada: Elizabeth Simcoe, Catharine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie, Anna Jameson, Lady Dufferin* (Toronto: Anansi, 1982); Mary Beacock Fryer, *Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe, 1762-1850 a Biography* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1989); Simcoe and Innis, *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*.

towards settlement, from barbaric woods to a civilisation. This was when Robertson desired the “history” of the province to begin.

When in 1759, her father Captain Gwillim, ascended with General Wolfe the rugged path that led to the heights of Abraham, little did he think that thirty-two years later his daughter would give to future generations of Canadians pictures of places in the new land that he and his companions were winning for the Empire. But the daring and resolute soldier of Wolfe transmitted to his daughter not only the courageous qualities that had been necessary to win this new land for Britain, but also the foresight and the genius by which she has preserved by pen and pencil the spirit both of the natural scenery and the social life of the New Britain that was being planted.... Were it not for her work, we would not have the views of Toronto Harbour at the end of the eighteenth century. We would not be able to contrast the quiet of the harbour and its surroundings in 1793, when it was the home of the aborigine and the haunt of the wild fowl... In presenting this record of her life my hope is that it not only may be read with pleasure, but also find a place on the bookshelf of all who take interest in the pioneer days of the province that started its pace the making of history one hundred and twenty years ago.<sup>83</sup>

Robertson equated Elizabeth’s actions and gazes to those of her soldier father. He represented both of them as playing the role of both civiliser and conqueror. What was important to him was that she also acted along with other white, English-speaking women in the North American wilderness through her voice and actions. It was central to Robertson’s narrative that her presence in the colony was as a bearer of civilisation. She

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<sup>83</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, x–xi, 33–34.

performed a significant step along the road towards taming and grooming the wilderness to prepare the way for a Canadian nation.<sup>84</sup>

Elizabeth's own words that Robertson so carefully framed and meticulously reproduced conveyed a different idea of her own role in the province. Her actions towards Upper Canada were as an imperial agent alongside her husband. Governing the new Province and administering a colony was the aim and goal of both John and of his wife, Elizabeth. It was to set up a colonial government to project imperial knowledge and power in this place. Neither John nor Elizabeth saw him or herself as father or mother of a province or of a future nation-state, but as imperial subjects playing out a role deeply loyal to a specific idea of the British Empire and towards this they assumed that a specific way of knowing and particular kind of action was required. The following chapter argues that Elizabeth's role as imperial agent and purveyor of civilisation exposes the ways that her husband also viewed the Province and his desires towards it.

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<sup>84</sup> Sheila McManus, *Line Which Separates: Race, Gender, and the Making of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), xiii.

### Chapter Three: Elizabeth Simcoe's Diary: Cataloguing and Registering Imperial Truths

*After an excellent breakfast we ascended an exceeding steep road to the top of the Mountain which commands a fine view of the Country, as far as the Garrison of Niagara & across the lake. From hence the road is entirely flat to the Falls of which I did not hear a sound until within a mile of them.... The fall is said to be but 170 feet in height. The River previously rushes in the most rapid manner on a declivity for 3 miles & those rapids are a very fine sight. The fall itself is the grandest sight imaginable from the immense width of waters & the circular form of the grand fall... A few Rocks separate this from Ft. Schlosser Fall which passing over a straight ledge of rock has not the beauty of the circular form or its green color, the whole center of the circular fall being of the brightest green & below it is frequently seen a Rainbow.*

—Elizabeth Simcoe (Sunday, 29 July 1792).<sup>1</sup>

British imperial actors perceived the spatial and political place of Upper Canada and the rivers and lakes of the colony at the end of the eighteenth century to be vacuous of desires, aspirations, ideals, and possibilities. Of all of the contents of the “archive” from which to draw from this time and place that may illuminate the imperial notions around what the present and future geographic place of this colony may be, one of them is Elizabeth Simcoe’s diary. She was John Graves Simcoe’s wife, and he the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. Scholars have mined this diary as a trove of “social history” of the time. Elizabeth Simcoe’s diary is a well-known piece of the archive for Upper Canadian historiography, and it is valued by historians because it is written by a woman—a voice that is often underrepresented in this time and place. It is a narration of a time and space written in a European voice, with a “civilised” tone, and in English: an

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Simcoe, *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*, ed. Mary Quayle Innis (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 2007), 107.

imperial language. This chapter focuses on the ways that Elizabeth's words expose the ways that she and other imperial agents perceived the colony of Upper Canada. I argue that not only does Elizabeth's "diary" convey her thoughts and assumptions about the place but that her perspective was one of administrator, coloniser, and cartographer.

Elizabeth's view of and desire for the Province was similar to that of her husband John's and, in some instances, she more explicitly expressed this in her daily entries than he did in his official correspondence.

In her diary, Elizabeth conveyed assumptions about the kind of culture she inhabited and exported along with herself into the space of Upper Canada. The ways this manifested were many: she found "civilisation" in some and judged that it was missing in others. She identified some spaces to be resonant with her idea of progress and possibility and elsewhere she claimed to have encountered hopelessness and backwardness. These interpretive acts betrayed her idea of what imperial progress in this space, both geographic and cultural, must entail. It demonstrated her assumption that her presence in Upper Canada as part of Empire was unquestionably appropriate.

This does not mean that Elizabeth herself was something discrete or imperial in essence. People and places that were the objects of her gaze were fully "other" to her and to the Empire. She was, perhaps willfully, blind to the ways in which she herself was "other" and ignorant, partial, or limited. She disclosed an awareness in her writings of the fact that she was creating an archive that would ostensibly illuminate the time and space she inhabited. The light it shone, however, revealed the impotence of the Empire, its partiality, and its myopia, along with its ostensible expressions of strength. The existing

kinds of knowledge of the space that she encountered, specifically the knowledge of the waterways of Upper Canada, for her, was partial, incomplete, and not useful for the kind of ways of knowing she assumed must be part of any imperial expansion.

### **Cartography and Imperial Administration**

While Elizabeth's domestic activities and daily life are represented in this set of writings, I contend that it also contains an imperial focus that has been largely overlooked in other scholars' work.<sup>2</sup> If we accept Foucault's definition of power as the desire to institutionalise and professionalise the "interrogation... inquisition...[and] registration of truth," Elizabeth understood her relationship with the space of Upper Canada as one of colonisation.<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth's writing communicated that she was as keen to administer the colony as was her husband. In her entries and letters, Elizabeth clearly represented her husband's intentions towards this Province, and in some ways, she conveyed more explicitly the assumptions and focuses of their five years spent in North America than the correspondence and writings John left behind. For her, the waters of the St. Lawrence River, the terrain of Upper Canada, including its mapping and surveying, the assessment

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<sup>2</sup> Some of these books that have relied heavily upon or reproduced the "diary" include, John M. Bassett, *Elizabeth Simcoe, First Lady of Upper Canada* (Don Mills, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1974); Helen M. Buss, *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women's Autobiography in English* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada: 1790-1840* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995); Marian Fowler, *The Embroidered Tent: Five Gentlewomen in Early Canada: Elizabeth Simcoe, Catharine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie, Anna Jameson, Lady Dufferin* (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1982); Mary Beacock Fryer, *Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe, 1762-1850: A Biography* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1989); Elizabeth Simcoe and John Ross Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe: Wife of the First Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada 1792-6* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911); Simcoe and Innis, *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*.

<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 93.



of the civility of the society she encountered, and her place within an imperial system of knowledge and measurement was all a part of this.

Elizabeth was like other imperial actors who increasingly assumed by the end of the eighteenth century that an exact knowledge of space was not only essential but that its grasp was possible and necessary.<sup>4</sup> She wrote of her pleasure in purchasing a “wooden pantograph, an instrument for the mechanical copying of engravings, diagrams and plans” before she left England for North America.<sup>5</sup> Even as she was involved in the self-conscious representation of an imperial idea of knowledge of space and participated in the increasingly “accurate” representation of it cartographically she was also engaged in the same kind of self-mapping and representation. This act involved the intentional editing and “cutting off” corners of her own experience to fit her page and her audience that autobiographical works must involve.

Elizabeth wrote consistently of John’s intention towards and plans for the colony as they travelled throughout it. The times they spent in Kingston were marked by her disdain for the town and expressions of their mutual dissatisfaction with it as a location for the seat of government.<sup>6</sup> As I explore further in Chapter Six, this was not unrelated to Sir John Johnson’s place in Kingston and the Simcoes’ shared antipathy towards him.

While Kingston was not favourable for a place to develop in their estimation, the desired

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora’s Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Friday, 23 September 1791, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 40.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 110, 131.

location of London or even the newly founded city of York increasingly were. Elizabeth described in a variety of ways and at different times why this location seemed so suitable to John. Early in her stay in Toronto, she wrote, “the bay is a mile across. The Governor thinks, from the manner in which the sandbanks are formed, they are capable of being fortified so as to be impregnable; he therefore calls it “Gibraltar Point,” tho’ the land is low.”<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth was keen to measure everything that she could, and John was obsessed with the militaristically defensible nature of this location for a significant city. He compared it to the vast rock formations of Gibraltar, a significant leap at which to arrive from a protruding sandbank into a river.

Measuring, navigating, surveying, and mapping Upper Canada, specifically through a more complete knowledge of the waterways, was at the forefront of John’s activities throughout his stay in Upper Canada, and Elizabeth documented this focus in her diary as well: “Lt. Smith of the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment who is here as Acting Deputy Surveyor-General read prayers to the Queen’s Rangers assembled under some trees near the parade.”<sup>8</sup> Her descriptions of attending church or services were rare; they were usually only included when someone she considered worthy of note was presiding. For example, in 1794, she mentioned attending a sermon when the Bishop was visiting them in Niagara.<sup>9</sup> As a surveyor, Lt. Smith apparently held a similar position as the Bishop in Elizabeth’s estimation for he was an important figure in the Simcoes’ cartographic efforts. “This evening we went to see a creek which is to be called the River Don,” wrote

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<sup>7</sup> Saturday, 10 August 1793, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 184.

<sup>8</sup> Sunday, 11 August 1793, *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Sunday, 10 August 1794, *Ibid.*, 238.

Elizabeth after the prayer service. While she did not explicitly list Smith's presence on her outing to the creek, it was implied. Not only was she excited by the surveyor's presence, but that his stay in Toronto was also accompanied with an act of naming a body of water. But her geographical work both in the field and in the diary went further. About the River Don, she explained that "It falls into the bay near the peninsula. After we entered we rowed some distance among low lands covered with rushes."<sup>10</sup> Here she both witnessed and participated in the exploration and increased expansion of knowledge of the province alongside the surveyor who was charged with this mapping endeavour.

Like many other imperial actors before and after her, Elizabeth assumed that her efforts with her husband towards an increasingly "accurate" knowledge and mapping of Upper Canada would lend itself to their administrative plans. "Lt. Smith has drawn a fine map of the La Tranche River," she wrote, "From what has been surveyed, it is proved that Charlevoix, the French explorer's map, describes the country with great truth."<sup>11</sup> The La Tranche was the French name for what John would rechristen the "Thames" on which he desired to found a new capital, London.<sup>12</sup> (Figure 6 is a published map that is widely agreed to have been largely derived from maps created by Father Charlevoix and that were subsequently produced by Jacques Bellin. The square on the map shows the location of the River La Tranche to which Elizabeth refers.)<sup>13</sup>

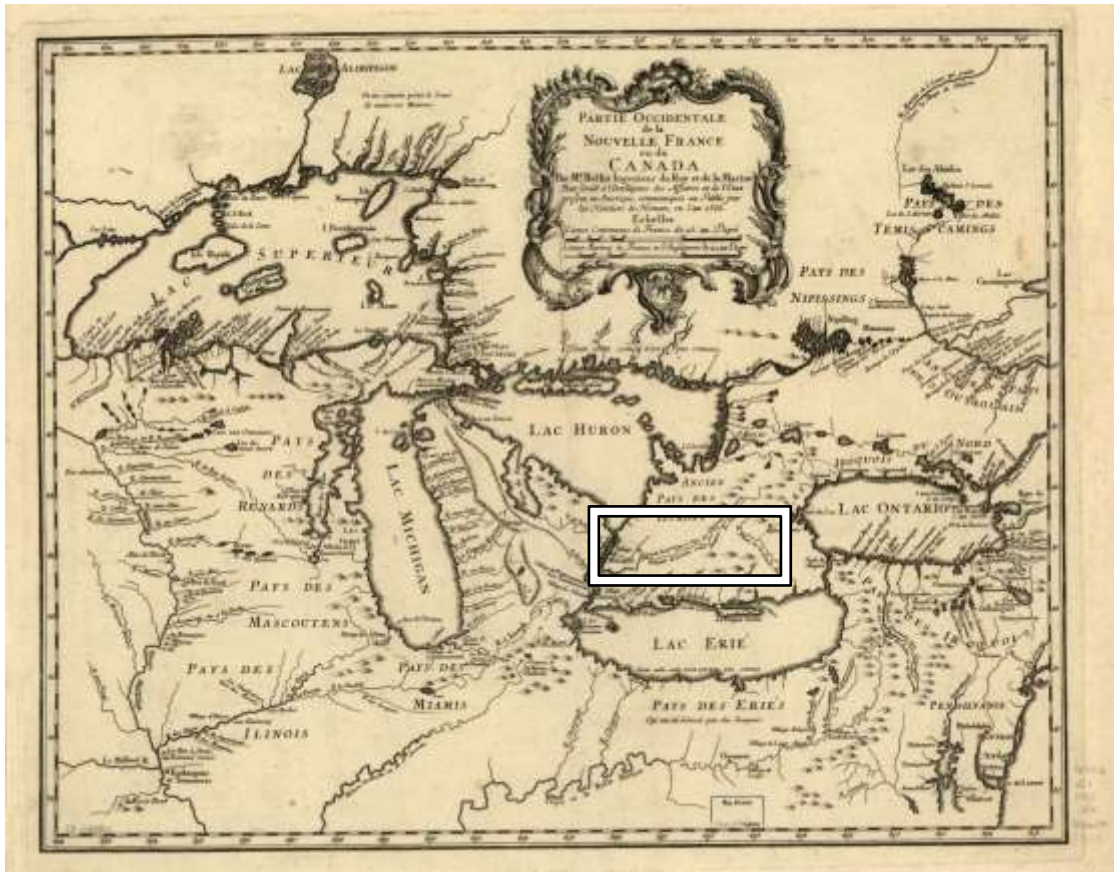
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<sup>10</sup> Sunday, 11 August 1793, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 184.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> See also Figure 8 for an example of a representation of the La Tranche or Thames River.

<sup>13</sup> David M. Hayne, "Charlevoix, Pierre-Francois-Xavier De," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, Montréal: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1974), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/charlevoix\\_pierre\\_francois\\_xavier\\_de\\_3E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/charlevoix_pierre_francois_xavier_de_3E.html).



**Figure 6: *Partie Occidentale de la Nouvelle France ou de Canada*, Jacques Nicholas Bellin and Father Pierre Charlevoix, (1755).<sup>14</sup>**

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<sup>14</sup> *Partie Occidentale de la Nouvelle France ou de Canada*, Jacques Nicholas Bellin and Father Pierre Charlevoix, (Nurnberg, 1755), Scale 1:3,500,000, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, LC 73694802, <https://lccn.loc.gov/73694802>. The location of the river “La Tranche” [Thames] is indicated by a square superimposed on the map.

The efforts towards creating this kind of “truthful” description of the country was a passion she shared with her husband. Indeed, Elizabeth went on to laud Smith’s accuracy with the approbation that, “If the line from the road to the river La Tranche was laid down according to its true bearings on any map but Charlevoix’s, it would strike Lake Erie instead of La Tranche.”<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth’s knowledge of Charlevoix preceded this moment; earlier in the diary she wrote of a day on the ocean voyage to Québec that “Coll. Simcoe has been reading *L’Histoire Generale de la Nouvelle France*, by Francois Xavier Charlevoix, the French Jesuit traveller, who twice visited Canada and sailed down the Mississippi to New Orleans.”<sup>16</sup> John’s most trusted map of the territory as he travelled to North America was that produced by the French Jesuit priest in 1744.<sup>17</sup>

Elizabeth was as interested as her husband or his surveyors in this nascent province and in the accurate and complete mapping of territory. Elizabeth deemed her own knowledge of the province to be as accurate as those successful and “true” mapping efforts. She assumed that this kind of knowledge could be assessed for its accuracy and expressed disdain for “any map but Charlevoix’s.” This map of Charlevoix’s influenced deeply other cartographic projects and beliefs about the geographic details of the place for nearly a century. Its influence can be traced through the years because of his inclusion of a fictitious “Isle Philippeaux” in Lake Superior that continued to appear on subsequent maps decades after his map was first reproduced in 1744. The pervasion of this “Isle

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<sup>15</sup> Sunday, 11 August 1793, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 184–185.

<sup>16</sup> Monday, 10 October 1791, *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>17</sup> Hayne, “Charlevoix, Pierre-Francois-Xavier De;” Peter Whitfield, *New Found Lands: Maps in the History of Exploration* (London: Routledge, 2015), 144.

Philippeaux” was so deep that it was even explicitly mentioned in the 1783 Peace Treaty between the American colonies and Britain.<sup>18</sup>

On Friday the 25<sup>th</sup> of October of that year, just after John had returned from his exploratory journey northward, she wrote to an unknown recipient:

I send a map to elucidate the Governor’s journey, which was attended with danger as well as with many pleasant circumstances. The western side of the lake is drawn from Mr. Pilkington’s sketches, the eastern from former accounts. Mr. Pilkington, who was one of the party, says the scenery was fit for pictures the whole way, and from his drawings I should suppose so.<sup>19</sup>

It may be that this “map” (Figure 7) of which she wrote is one of Elizabeth’s depictions of a cartographic image of Upper Canada, but she labeled it to be a “Sketch” on the image itself.<sup>20</sup>

She also wrote that she used “sketches” of Mr. Pilkington’s to create this “map.” What is striking about her language is the use of the term “sketch” and that of “map.” In John’s correspondence, as well as hers, they refer to their work of depicting the colony as “sketches,” and often more generally published or better-known cartographic examples are referred to as maps.<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth made it clear that there was a hierarchy of both

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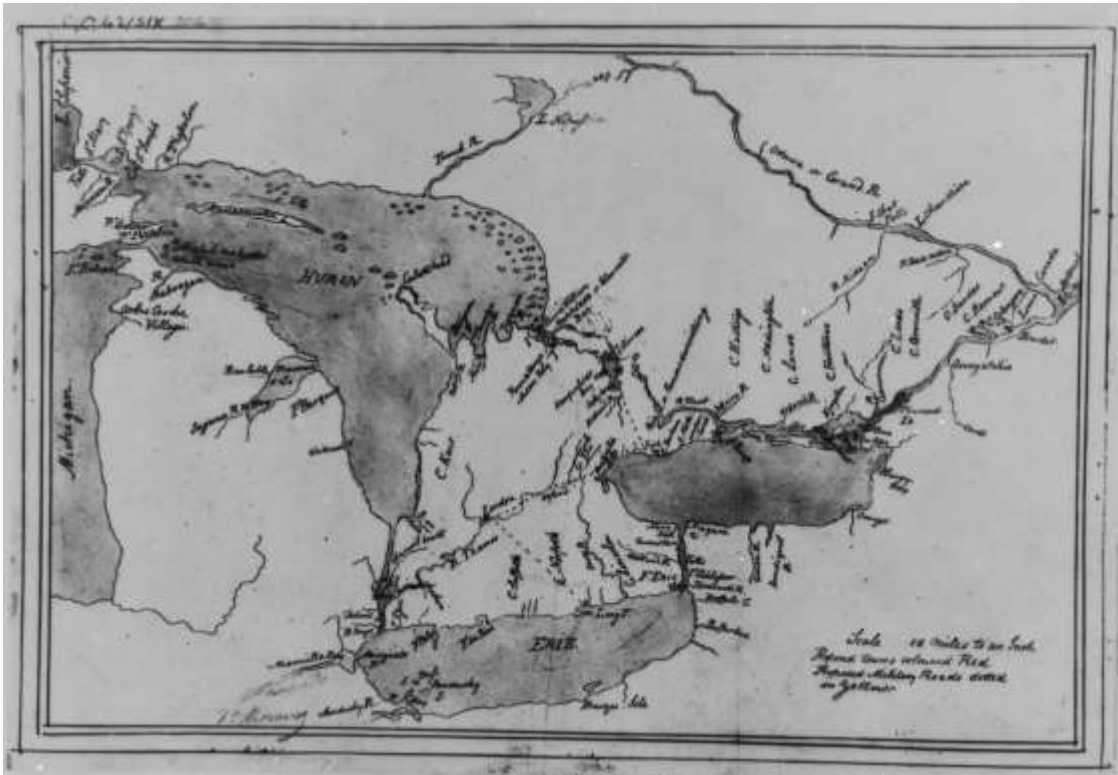
<sup>18</sup> *Paris Peace Treaty, 1783* (Paris, 1783); J. P. D. Dunbabin, “Motives for Mapping the Great Lakes: Upper Canada, 1782-1827,” *Michigan Historical Review* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 1–44; 4; David William Smyth, *A Short Topographical Description of His Majesty’s Province of Upper Canada, in North America* (London: Published by W. Faden, Geographer to His Majesty, and to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, Charing-Cross, 1799), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 196.

<sup>20</sup> Although it is not published in collections of her diaries by either Robertson or Innis, nor is it included in Cruikshank’s multi-volume collection of John’s correspondence, we know it was created in 1793. LAC has it on microfiche, held in their special collections, but it is not included in the National Map Collection along with the other sources generated during this time. Elizabeth P. Simcoe, *Sketch of Upper Canada, Cartographic Material*, 1 inch to 50 miles (Canada, 1793), R12567-123-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>21</sup> See the following examples in Brigadier General E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada*, Vol. 1; 1789–1793 (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), 43, 55, 105.

reliability and authority depending on what term she used for cartographic depictions: “I find our maps to be little better than sketches,” and connected this to the circumstance that “little of the country [has] been surveyed.”<sup>22</sup>



**Figure 7: Elizabeth P. Simcoe, “Sketch” of Upper Canada,” (1793).<sup>23</sup>**

What is notable here, is that Elizabeth at times seemed to use certain terms interchangeably and at other times appeared to intentionally define separately. The

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<sup>22</sup> Thursday, 15 March 1792, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 81.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth P. Simcoe, *Sketch of Upper Canada*, Cartographic Material, 1 inch to 50 miles (Canada, 1793), R12567-123-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

depiction she labeled, “Sketch,” that she drew of the entire Province was more comprehensive than many of the others that were produced and included both in the LAC and in John’s published correspondence.<sup>24</sup> It was complete with a scale and a key for deciphering “proposed towns” and “proposed military roads.” She also referred to other times when she “began to draw a map of the Genesee River” and another instance where she “copied some of Des Barres’ charts this morning.”<sup>25</sup> She often referred to “sketching” as an activity and this generally occurred when she was an active and present observer of a scene, location, object, or person. John himself used the term to describe the same kind of active rendition in which he participated but those which were not formally reproduced or published.

### **Culture as Empire**

Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim Simcoe is not unknown in Canadian historiography. She has been lauded variously as a pioneer woman and as a founding “mother” of Canada. Her diary and letters have been used as precious primary sources; they are championed among very few windows into the “social” history of Upper Canada. Her watercolours are displayed in museums in Canada and reproduced in works that seek to represent Upper Canada as it was. Her descriptions of the landscape of the province are also included in several works of social histories of Canada. These are generally centered

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<sup>24</sup> E.g., Lieutenant Pilkington, *Sketch of a Route from York Town on Lake Ontario to Penatagasneen on Lake Huron* (Upper Canada, 1793), NMC, 0002834, Library and Archives Canada; W. C. Chewett, *Communication between Lake St. Clair and York and Lake Simcoe and York*, Four miles to one inch (Upper Canada: Surveyor Gen Office, October 23, 1794), 0011238, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>25</sup> Sunday, 16 October and Wednesday, 9 November 1791, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 46, 51; John Crowley E., “‘Taken on the Spot’: The Visual Appropriation of New France for the Global British Landscape,” *CHR Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (2005): 1–28, 2.



around the white women who were present during the early years of the province and who endured great hardship in the wilderness.<sup>26</sup> In these and other works she is depicted variously as the “First Lady of Upper Canada,” the devoted wife, and a faithful descriptor of the wilds of Upper Canada.<sup>27</sup> Her diary and facsimiles of the sketches that she created during the time that she spent in North America with her husband during his tenure as Lieutenant Governor were reproduced and published with commentary by J. Ross Robertson in 1911 and since then other authors have produced several biographies based on his reproduction and representation of her original diary.<sup>28</sup>

There is a dissonance that occurred for me in reading Elizabeth’s words as they are often interpreted and represented. Elizabeth’s ways of knowing and her interaction with Upper Canada was peripatetic, but this does not fit conveniently with the position that Elizabeth’s records and experiences have hitherto held in Upper Canadian historiography. Unlike the place of her diary in the “canon,” she was never a “Canadian” nor did she embody simply the role of a white woman in the wilderness. What is accurate is that she was indeed a woman of British descent who lived for a time in Upper Canada that was less populated than it is now, but she was no settler, despite her presence in Canadian frontier and settler historiography. She was decisively un-settled in Upper Canada, despite the fact that throughout her diary she wrote explicitly of her growing love for and appreciation of the place in which she lived for five years. Aside from their

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<sup>26</sup> Bassett, *Elizabeth Simcoe*; Fowler, *The Embroidered Tent*; Fryer, *Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe*; Simcoe, *Mrs. Simcoe’s Diary*; Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids*, 4–5.

<sup>27</sup> As seen in the title of Bassett’s: *Elizabeth Simcoe: First Lady of Upper Canada*.

<sup>28</sup> Fryer, *Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe*; Bassett, *Elizabeth Simcoe*; Simcoe and Innis, *Mrs. Simcoe’s Diary*.

famous summer home “Castle Frank,” she and John had no truly permanent dwellings or specific places in Upper Canada where they lived.<sup>29</sup> They stayed for a time at Navy Hall near Niagara, and this was perhaps their most settled place, but even during these times she wrote of “spending a month with Mrs. Smith” because she felt “extremely inconvenienced by the Commissioners’ residence in our small house.”<sup>30</sup> From Québec City to Niagara to York, she often stayed in canvas structures or in barracks, both were temporary dwellings. For example, she wrote of an evening when they “returned to the tents, and Francis lay down on his greatcoat on the grass and went to sleep until his tent was ready for him. We supped by starlight amid this fine scenery of wood and water; the bright fires of the soldiers below the hill, contrasted with a dark sky, now and then brightened by a gleam of moonlight, had a beautiful effect.”<sup>31</sup> This was on a journey they made up the St. Lawrence towards Niagara, a place she had been keen to visit. By the next day, however, she wrote, “We arrived at Niagara at twelve, and before two I wished to return to York; the heat here was so great, and looking on the land seemed to me to add to the heat, and was quite disagreeable after having been accustomed to look on the bay at York.”<sup>32</sup> The Elizabeth we know through her writing was no settler; Upper Canada was never her home.

Helen Buss, writing of autobiographical representations of women in Canada’s past, argues that rather than placing women in a specific geographic place historically, we

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<sup>29</sup> Henry Scadding, *The Story of Castle Frank, Toronto* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose, 1895), 7.

<sup>30</sup> Friday, 14 June 1793, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 168.

<sup>31</sup> Saturday, 10 May 1794, *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>32</sup> Sunday, 11 May 1794, *Ibid.*

should bear in mind that they often “locate themselves in their immediate circumstances and not in the kinds of unifying myths based on time and place that ... legitimize the work of [male] artists.”<sup>33</sup> She echoes Elizabeth Hampsten’s assertions that for women writing at the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, a sense of place had “other boundaries than topography: dangers... fire, flood, cold, drought, disease, madness and death.”<sup>34</sup> Hampsten underlines the similarity between women’s experiences across times and regions in representations of the past, but she also articulates an important category of research that siloes works like Elizabeth’s diary. While these other “boundaries” of being unquestionably influenced Elizabeth’s notion of place, I contend that Elizabeth was indeed keenly interested in the geographically designated “place” of Upper Canada; this interest was specifically in the “unifying myths” and overarching boundaries of place and the specificities of both hers and John’s imperial knowledge of it.

Elizabeth was a noble woman of the British Empire who had not only inherited her family’s extensive properties in Wales, but was also married to a man, John Graves Simcoe, who was firmly a man of the Empire and whose loyalties and sense of being in North America were not as part of the colony but as an imperial agent. Elizabeth lived fully during her stay in Upper Canada, along the banks of the St. Lawrence, but the voice that is represented as her diary cannot simply be read as a window into the life, dreams, and desires of a white settler woman, but rather, it reveals the gaze of an intentional and committed imperial actor. Hers was an imperial focus that consistently mirrored the

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<sup>33</sup> Buss, *Mapping Our Selves*, 47.

<sup>34</sup> qtd. in *Ibid.*

ideals and priorities found in the extensive documents that her husband John created as the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada. There is even compelling evidence that she actively helped to create the large archive of documents that are contained in the five-volume set of his correspondence from this time period. Observers at the time noted that she was immensely useful to him in his efforts, acting not only as his scribe for his “official” correspondence, but also as a skilled mapmaker.<sup>35</sup>

As an archival piece, this diary has much to say. If, as Ann Stoler argues, “[c]olonial archives are a technology that helped produce the world rather than a window into it,”<sup>36</sup> the ways this record-of-self self-consciously created a colonial space, “Upper Canada,” speaks volumes about the intentions of Elizabeth and her husband towards the colony. This is a rare primary source generated by a woman that is accepted as an historically accurate and legitimate piece of evidence. It is a part of the venerable archive that is acceptable because it was created by pen and on paper, enshrined in its authority because of the author’s position within Empire and because of her race and class. It is written in an imperial language by a reputable and confirmed author whose voice is considered trustworthy and accurate enough to relay “facts” about the past. Although Elizabeth gave birth to two children and even tragically lost a young daughter in April of 1794 and buried her at York without her husband present—events that profoundly mark

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<sup>35</sup> François-Alexandre-Frédéric La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797: With an Authentic Account of Lower Canada*, ed. Henry Neuman (London; sold by T. Hurst and J. Wallis, Paternoster-Row, and by Carpenter and Co. Old Bond-Street: Printed for R. Phillips, no. 71, St. Paul’s Church-Yard, by T. Davison, Lombard-Street, Fleet-Street, 1799), 232.

<sup>36</sup> qtd. in Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World*, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1.

and shape lives and influence experiences—she did not record either of these epochs in these documents.<sup>37</sup> There were other letters that communicated these events, but the consistent and chronological records of her experiences that are contained in her “diary” do not record these experiences.<sup>38</sup> Instead, in this curated work she consistently maintained another focus: the gaze of an imperial actor towards a colonial space. The image of self that she continually expressed in and performed through the writing in her diary and what it revealed of her focus during her stay in Upper Canada, was most significantly her association with the actions and desires of her husband, John Graves Simcoe, and with his administrative work in the colony. His priorities were those of Empire, and it is this bent that Elizabeth’s personal writing in her diary reveals.

Its place in the “canon” of Canadian history was enshrined in 1911 by J. Ross Robertson who reproduced the nearly complete, edited diary in *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*. By the time he published her diary, Robertson had established himself as a journalist, a philanthropist, and an author of various histories.<sup>39</sup> “It is now one-hundred-three years,” he wrote in the introduction of *The History of Freemasonry in Canada*, “since the select and happy few, who, blessed with the knowledge of our mystic fellowship, banded together and circled around the Masonic altar in what was then a trackless forest, the home of the savage and the haunt of wild fowl, but now one of the

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<sup>37</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 146.

<sup>38</sup> York, May 1794, Simcoe and Innis, *Mrs. Simcoe’s Diary*, 161.

<sup>39</sup> Minko Sotiron, “Robertson, John Ross,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, Montréal: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1998), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/robertson\\_john\\_ross\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/robertson_john_ross_14E.html).

great centres of Christianity and civilization.”<sup>40</sup> In all his published works Robertson sought to promote this kind of narrative of progress, prehistory, and civilisation, and this bent is consistent with the editorial comments he included alongside Elizabeth’s diary entries. The fact that Elizabeth’s diary was written in an imperial language and reproduced in print is an important component of this. Miles Ogborn argues in his work, *Indian Ink*, that in examining colonial spaces, “the textual and the material are to be understood together in the exertion of imperial power over people and places” and that “more often than not, [there is] an underlying consensus that formations of imperial power and knowledge are both potentially transformative and, at the same time, contested, fragmentary, contradictory and anxious.”<sup>41</sup> These anxieties and contradictions are a part of Elizabeth’s writing but they are also present in the position Robertson later sought for her in representations of Canada’s past.

Although this diary is not unique as a source of a woman’s perspective from Upper Canada during this time period, it is rarer as a source for administrative or imperial notions because its voice is that of a woman, a subset of society that is traditionally silenced and cordoned off from the focuses and activities around governmentality, or especially representations of governmentality, at the end of the eighteenth century. This does not mean that women were not an active part of the shaping and thinking of the colony and its future, but that histories of administrative activities of this time and place

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<sup>40</sup> J. Ross Robertson, *The History of Freemasonry in Canada, from Its Introduction in 1749; Compiled and Written from Official Records and from Mss. Covering the Period 1749-1858, in the Possession of the Author* (Toronto: G.N. Morang, 1900), 17.

<sup>41</sup> Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1–2.

are largely absent representations of women being present and actively participatory. Jane Errington reminds us that Upper Canada in its founding decade was a frontier society, a kind of organism that Mary Ryan poignantly defines as “temporary [and] doomed to extinction within a generation.”<sup>42</sup> According to Ryan, frontiers are places where women’s presence and activities often belie societal norms of the same time.<sup>43</sup> Reading Elizabeth’s diary for its administrative and imperial ideas adds to this kind of representation of women’s place within the frontier society of Upper Canada at the end of the eighteenth century. Errington and Ryan write about women who laboured in fields and helped to raise barns in Upper Canada and in New York but Elizabeth’s writings, and those of others who observed her, suggest she laboured to help create a colony through administration and empirical geographical knowledge.<sup>44</sup> Denis Longchamps has recently gone so far as to connect Elizabeth to her husband’s work in the colony, arguing that she “was more than a copyist; she made her mark as a cartographer.”<sup>45</sup>

Bruce Curtis questions the rigid public/private delineation in exercises of projecting power and knowledge in colonial Canada in the nineteenth century. He challenges paradigms “in which women do not exercise power in public and political power does not work in private.” This bifurcation is “clearly inadequate for dealing with aristocratic social relations.” Rather, he contends, “the display of social virtues was a

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<sup>42</sup> Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids*, 8; Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 20.

<sup>43</sup> Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids*, 9; Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*, 20.

<sup>45</sup> Denis Longchamps, “Political Tourism: Elizabeth Simcoe’s Maps and Views of Canada (1791–1796),” *Imago Mundi* 66, no. 2 (July 3, 2014): 221.

political arena in which men and women participated, both publicly and privately. The domestic is, at times, mobilized in public, and class power is reproduced in it; as such the domestic is neither unambiguously private nor public.”<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth and John both moved within and created aristocratic circles in which to move during their stay in Upper Canada. A General Lincoln described approvingly of John’s behaviour that

Governor Simcoe is exceedingly attentive in these public assemblies, and makes it his study to reconcile the inhabitants, who have tasted the pleasure of society, to their present situation in an infant province. He intends the next winter to have concerts and assemblies very frequently. Hereby he at once evinces a regard to the happiness of the people and his knowledge of the world; for while the people are allured to become settlers in this country from the richness of the soil and the clemency of the seasons, it is important to make their situations as flattering as possible.<sup>47</sup>

John was intentional in his development of the social life of the colony and even explicitly expressed his belief in his own correspondence that this act was an important one to build and develop a population.<sup>48</sup>

Although the corpus of the “diary” as a whole is contested, within the wider context of the eighteenth century there is evidence for this kind of regimented entry that Elizabeth’s echoes. Diaries, that is, daily records of events, grew in number throughout the eighteenth century and imperial actors were especially prolific in this form of record during the nineteenth century. Reinhart Koselleck argues that a shift from eschatological time heavily influenced by the church to the Enlightenment notion of the self and

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<sup>46</sup> Bruce Curtis, “The ‘Most Splendid Pageant Ever Seen’: Grandeur, the Domestic, and Condescension in Lord Durham’s Political Theatre,” *Canadian Historical Review* 89, no. 1 (March 2008): 59.

<sup>47</sup> John H. Eastburn, ed., “Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society,” *Collections Massachusetts Historical Society* Third Series, Vol. V (1836): 124–25.

<sup>48</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 January 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:17–19.



science-driven epistemologies created a new kind of interaction with the present that precipitated diary-making.<sup>49</sup> Not only was the present more visible within this kind of understanding of the world, but the ways that humans were implicated with the potential and mandate to shape and influence the present and their world encouraged the production of diaries which would document this very thing. Still, the Protestant mandate for earthly hard work and productivity gave rise to the account for details of one's actions and activities. Elizabeth consistently employed this kind of emphasis on her activities in the colony. For example, she wrote on Friday, 8 February 1793, just after the birth of her daughter Katherine, the event of which there is no mention in her diary, "I draw maps, write, read and work so much that the days do not seem long."<sup>50</sup> Most often, however, instead of recording a list of accomplishments or duties, she wrote of her societal interactions. Her keen sense of duty and the hard work she related are focussed around embodying and performing civilisation. She often compared societal trappings she encountered to those back in England. She described chairs she saw at Mr. Frobisher's house in Montreal, that "were the same as I have seen sold in London for four guineas each."<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth was gratified to note that while she stayed in Québec,

Lady and Lord Dorchester have been uniformly polite and obliging to me; she is one of those few who appear to act upon principle, and with a consistency which is not to be moved.... I like the parties at the Chateau excessively, for there are forty or fifty people in an evening, and I think it is very amusing to walk about the room and have

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<sup>49</sup> Reinhart Koselleck and Keith Tribe, *Futures Past: On the semantics of historical time* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2004), 22.

<sup>50</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 148.

<sup>51</sup> Monday, 18 June 1792, *Ibid.*, 97.

something to say to everybody without a long conversation with any.<sup>52</sup> She equated this kind of variety in company to having only a few persons with which to associate. She and her husband were both active in expanding the colonial society. Curtis connects the performance of societal trappings with the extension of power and authority over space. He terms this to be “grandeur,” which he defines as “both a position of social structure and something that must be performed, stylized in a manner of living, and confirmed through the recognition of those exposed to it. As with all forms of power, grandeur is something that must be reproduced and legitimated from day to day and from one generation to the next to endure.”<sup>53</sup> Elizabeth’s diary supports his claims in her continual reproduction of civilisation and societal norms wherever she was; this was true whether she “dined” with her children and their attendants on an island in the middle of the St. Lawrence River or when she presided over a proper soiree in their lodgings in Québec City. She wrote of an evening meal when “we dined too late to be pleasant. I suppose it was meant for respect.”<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth was as active in the production of society and this kind of projection of power as was her husband.

The form of the “archive” for this research is as much a subject of inquiry as the content of these documents. The “diary,” or record of daily activities, as archive is one that is particularly important to consider in the context of an interrogation of an imperial place at the end of the eighteenth century. Diaries are an act of performance, willing a kind of notion and narration around the acts that one deems important enough to record.

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<sup>52</sup> Saturday, 6 December 1794, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 259.

<sup>53</sup> Curtis, “The ‘Most Splendid Pageant Ever Seen,’” 57.

<sup>54</sup> Tuesday, 26 June 1792, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 104.

Diana Taylor articulates that writing acts as a sort of mnemonic aid; it is a kind of a prompt to performance. She argues that the space of written culture, then, as now, is easier to control than embodied culture. It is important to consider this acting out of life and assumptions of culture as a component of existences in and representations of the past. Taylor goes so far as to contend that “performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or ... twice behaved behaviour.”<sup>55</sup> Diaries are an especially poignant example of this kind of twice acted expression of self and, for Elizabeth, her own representations of her actions in the colony were of those performing Empire in a peripheral place. This diary’s self-consciousness is that of being archive-worthy material. There is a glaring writing out of a private self, of the personal life, of the inner thoughts and desires of Elizabeth herself. Some important exceptions to this include her reactions to the rapids of the St. Lawrence described in Chapter Two. As in that instance, where her emotions and thoughts were expressed they were almost always most specifically how the water and geography impacted her. In this very act of creating an archive-acceptable source she participated in the performance of imperial desires towards the province. It is this form that the diary takes, and it is as this kind of form that it may expose the focuses of both John and Elizabeth Simcoe as they lived and moved and as they intentionally sought to shape and influence the nascent province.

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<sup>55</sup> Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 3.

In this dissertation I am inserting Elizabeth's writing into the archive of the political in Upper Canada's past. Kathleen Wilson challenges us to "[liberate] our notion of the 'political' in imperial Britain from its high-level straightjackets to include a broad range of social, cultural and symbolic practices that challenged, as well as maintained, the parameters of power."<sup>56</sup> She demonstrates that there were times and places where women were allowed into the "political sphere," for example, during "wartime, [when] women's devotion to the state and participation in the 'home front' was expected, if not lauded."<sup>57</sup> She goes so far as to contend that

in the realm of politics, as in many other areas of eighteenth-century public culture, women maintained a presence, albeit one circumscribed by ambiguities and contradictions...women could interpret Enlightenment universalism to include themselves; the injunctions to 'manly rationality' could emanate from, and be a source of identity for, writers and readers of both sexes and classes.<sup>58</sup>

For the Simcoes, their ideas and ways of knowing and being were not untouched by their interaction with this space and this will be examined in more depth as well, but the ways that John's notions of what his administrative plans for the colony would produce influenced what Elizabeth wrote and the content of her diary exposes much about their assumptions regarding the effect their actions would have on the future of the province, and of the Empire.

These layers of performance in Elizabeth's diary, the acting out of Empire and then representing these acts in a carefully transposed written piece, created a depth of

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<sup>56</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785*, (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

content that this chapter seeks to pierce. One of these performances that the diary contains throughout its duration is the performance of eating; Elizabeth varied her verbs for this act of food consumption depending on its context and the events surrounding its act. Of her journey by ship when they departed in September 1791 from Weymouth, England, she wrote, “Our hours are early. We breakfast at 8; dine at 2, and never take any supper.”<sup>59</sup> This is a precursor to her observations regarding repast during her stay in North America. Her descriptions of eating food depended upon her assessment of the way the activity was undertaken. On Tuesday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, her entry described her seasickness and she related, “it was by persevering to go on deck and by eating salt beef, covered with mustard, that I soon became well.” This contrasts to the next line where she wrote about her diversion at the “difficulties we meet with at dinner, when, in spite of all care, the dishes are often tossed to every corner of the room.”<sup>60</sup> She distinguished here and throughout her diary between merely eating and the act of dining, even when “dining” was impractical. The act of dining required certain trappings and ceremony and it was separated from the act of eating. It is the performance of dining that she was careful to craft in her diary to describe how she partook of food. This performance was important on two levels for Elizabeth. The first was as an imperial actor: that her civilised approach to a fundamental human activity like consuming calories necessary to sustain life would intentionally perform Empire as she engaged in it. The second aspect that was crucial to sustain about this performance was the record of it as the act in her diary as she wished it

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<sup>59</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 44.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

to have been performed.

Helen Buss makes the case that Elizabeth's act of creating the entries for her diary was as an author of the events she transposed in the text. Buss claims that these entries were "carefully shaped in moments of leisure from detailed notes on the scene earlier in the day or week."<sup>61</sup> Her assertion, that Elizabeth's diary was sent to her children's guardian for their reading pleasure and information, offers insight into its content and the kinds of representations that it contains. Buss reminds us that Robert Fothergill "calls such diaries a 'digested relevance,' prepared for the reassurance, instruction, and pleasure of those left behind."<sup>62</sup> The diary's audience, according to Buss, was Elizabeth's children and her dear friends charged with their care. Buss' thesis echoes Françoise Noël and Mary Innis in their assessment of this specific work as well: both of these scholars read Elizabeth's diaries as missives and carefully sculpted bits of information about her life in North America that she wrote to include her absent children and close friends in her experiences while she was away from them.<sup>63</sup> This kind of audience may assume for the presence of both more intimate detail and more constraint in other ways in the details that Elizabeth chose to include or omit.

If her children at home were included in her intended audience, Buss points out that the narration around frightening or uncertain events often focusses on the ways Elizabeth sought to minimise the situation or emphasises her light spirits. This is a

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<sup>61</sup> Buss, *Mapping Ourselves*, 39.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Françoise Noël, *Family Life and Sociability in Upper and Lower Canada, 1780-1870: A View from Diaries and Family Correspondence* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 4; Simcoe and Innis, *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*, 10-11.

compelling argument: Elizabeth often wrote of “diversions” during harrowing experiences. On her first, and clearly unpleasant, journey up the St. Lawrence River towards Upper Canada, she described a “bad breakfast” for which they paid too much, their next meal where they “stopped to dine in the boat near Machiche, in a small cove, where the heat was intense and the mosquitoes numerous,” and her day was not improved by their poor accommodations that evening. She ended this dismal entry, however, with anecdotes for her audience: “nothing amusing occurred but Mr. Talbot’s ineffectual efforts to paddle a canoe across the river. The difficulties he met with in this first attempt, and the handkerchief tied around his head, á la Canadien, diverted me much.” Not only was it the mimicry of *les Canadiens* who offered this kind of amusement for Elizabeth, but she also included their children’s nurse in this gaze: “Collins the nurse girl’s slow manner, characteristic of the Western States, diverted us. Being desired to make haste, she replied, ‘Must I not put the sugar in the children’s breakfast?’ in the true American tone.”<sup>64</sup>

Although there is without question merit to the argument of intimate kin as audience, this does not explain some of the most compelling contents of Elizabeth’s diary. Mary Beacock Fryer, in her biography of Elizabeth, points out that Elizabeth Simcoe and Jane Austen were contemporaries and their station in life was indeed similar in many aspects; they shared mutual acquaintances.<sup>65</sup> Elizabeth’s diaries do indeed in some ways resemble Austen’s writing, especially in the early entries when Elizabeth

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<sup>64</sup> Monday, 11 June 1792, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 92.

<sup>65</sup> Fryer, *Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe*, 7.

entered society in Québec City. She attended balls, like one at “the Chateau” that she detailed was held on “Queen Charlotte’s birthday” so “there were near 300 people. The ladies were well dressed.”<sup>66</sup> She also wrote of times when she “gave a dance and supper to a dozen of the 7<sup>th</sup> Fusiliers and as many young dancing ladies. My rooms being small obliged me to invite so few, and only those who danced.”<sup>67</sup> However, the impact on her of her experience in the North American continent, and her close association with her husband and his work, created a different kind of entry and representation than one of her peers who had no similar experience of a transatlantic journey. Elizabeth wrote of this kind of effect during an “evening calm and so very pleasant as almost to persuade me it is worth while to cross the Atlantic for the pleasure of voyaging on this delightful lake-like river, the setting sun reflecting the deepest shades from the shores and throwing rich tints on the water.”<sup>68</sup> Her ambivalence about whether the colony was charming or welcoming was often contrasted to the awe she experienced in its novelty and her perspective on its character changed throughout her stay.

She was ceaselessly curious about native plants and their uses, especially for cures. She described a “mountain” near Niagara as being “covered with a sweet, purple flower, the roots of which, infused in brandy make a wholesome cordial. It is called Oswego bitter. Mr. Russell says it is a wild balm of Gilead, and that an oil may be extracted from it.”<sup>69</sup> The final summer of 1795 that she spent in Upper Canada her diary

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<sup>66</sup> Wednesday, 18 January 1792, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 74.

<sup>67</sup> Tuesday, 24 January 1792, *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Tuesday, 12 June 1792, *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>69</sup> Sunday, 21 July 1793, *Ibid.*, 176.



was especially filled with these kinds of notations: “Elderflower leaves take off the pain of the gout or rheumatism,” she noted, and “Cat mint in tea is a good stomatic, and sweet Marjorie tea for the headache. Sweet briar and boiling water poured over it, put into jars, milk pans or anything that is to be washed out, purifies them sooner and better than anything else.”<sup>70</sup> “I was feverish,” she wrote the next day, “and felt great relief from a saline draught taken in the effervescent state, a little salt of wormwood water and two teaspoonfuls [*sic*] of lemon juice.”<sup>71</sup> She described also the large amount of produce she had become accustomed to consuming during the hot days of August: “All the vegetables are particularly good, and I eat little else. The Asiatics eat no meat in the summer, and I daresay they are right, and the heat here nearly approaches to that in the east. The people here in the summer live chiefly on vegetables and a little salt pork.”<sup>72</sup> While she was consistent in her imperial intentions towards the colony and she assumed herself to be the adjudicator of standards and measurements, her habits and her opinions slowly shifted and changed during her stay in Upper Canada.

Buss creates the comparison between cartographic projects and human efforts to translate their experiences into language—especially autobiographical linguistic representations.<sup>73</sup> This analysis seems especially relevant for Elizabeth’s diary. Her “sketches” and watercolours<sup>74</sup> that she produced during her stay in North America included many cartographic works. An example of these, Figure 8, is one of many that

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<sup>70</sup> Tuesday, 8 August 1795, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 290.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Buss, *Mapping Ourselves*, 9.

<sup>74</sup> See two examples in Chapter Two of this dissertation: Figures 4 and 5.



Like Figure 7, there were many of these that she meticulously copied from other maps while others she created for the Governor as an improvement on existing representations of cartography with which he worked to administer the colony and her cartographic depictions were even included in the Governor's official correspondence to the Home Office.<sup>76</sup>

### **Measurements as Expressions and Impositions of Empire**

Elizabeth was relentless in her commitment to a late-Enlightenment, scientific sensibility about measurement. From the first entry in Elizabeth's diary, on Saturday, 17 September 1791, from Weymouth, England, until the last on Sunday, 16 October 1796, she employed consistent, deliberate, and careful measurements of all kinds. Some of these she engaged in explicitly and with the intent of measuring the place and objects she encountered against imperial standards and others offered an implicit measurement against a personally held standard. One of the most basic ways she engaged in this was her use of calendar days to preface each of her entries. In doing so she recorded faithfully her own temporal place in relation to the imperial calendar. Her position as one who was capable of measurement and as an adjudicator of civilisation was consistent from the very beginning, before she even left the British Isles. In her entry on the third day from her departure from her home, she observed the use of a "Reeve Staff" by the inhabitants of Portland Island where she and John toured during their stop at Weymouth before

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<sup>76</sup> Longchamps, "Political Tourism," 215; La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada*, 242.

departing for North America. She judged this method of recording payments as “very simple—no writings or parchment used, no lawyers consulted.”<sup>77</sup>

Elizabeth also measured the development of places around her by her assessment of their relationship to the things that she considered more advanced. Here the calculation was based on a more impressionistic unit of refined British culture. This “simple” method she observed was consistent with the place that she found had “rough roads” through which she travelled in a “cart.” By contrast, she wrote of her civilised activity that evening: “I dined with Lady de la Pole at Stacey’s Hotel on the Esplanade, and went in the evening to see the play of “As You Like It,” which was very well performed. Col. Simcoe dined with Lord Grenville.”<sup>78</sup> In contrast to the “rough” and “simple” things she encountered on Portland Island, her own behaviour was refined. She and Col. Simcoe “dined,” and she allowed the play to be “well performed.”

Elizabeth also deployed a scientific and cartographic sensibility about distance and speed travelled. Her descriptions of her activities both before and during her stay in North America often included specific distances travelled and the method used. She described a “five-mile” drive she took on Portland Island in a “Sociable” as well as the less preferred trip in the cart.<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth’s first journey up the St. Lawrence was also full of these descriptions. Tuesday, 26 June 1792, she wrote that

Capt. Munro came here and brought a horse... for me to ride. As it would be very tedious to go up the Long Sault in the boat, we proposed riding beyond that and another rapid called Galettes. We set off about ten o’clock. On our way we passed through Cornwall, a settlement four

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<sup>77</sup> Monday, 19 September 1791, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 37-39.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Friday, 23 September 1791, Ibid., 40.

miles from Coll. Gray's. There are about fifteen houses and some neat gardens in them; and rode eleven miles to Mr. Macdonell's at the Long Sault, his farm being very near that Grand Rapid, which rapid continues a mile.<sup>80</sup>

This is a typical entry containing many forms of measurement: she included the time, the distance travelled to Cornwall, the number of houses there and the subsequent distance to her destination, as well as the length of the water feature itself. Other examples of this are when she recorded instances where horses were used to make the journey to Niagara and a few journeys in boat of which some were smoother than others. "It is found to be practicable to walk and ride [to Niagara] throughout the winter," she wrote, "therefore we are not in as isolated a situation as it was expected we should find it."<sup>81</sup> She was interested, always, in the distance travelled, the method of transportation and its efficacy depending on the weather, and the amount of time that it took. Elizabeth not only described the traffic to and from places of interest, but also included the important measurements of speed. This act of imperial measurement connected her movements in the colony to those of the Empire. "The Mississauga," she described, "came from Niagara in four hours."<sup>82</sup> Two weeks later she recorded that "Mr. Pilkington coasted the lake from Niagara, and arrived here in two days, about 100 miles."<sup>83</sup>

Through these quantifications she placed herself as knowledge-bearer and she consistently measured the people, places, flora, and fauna which she encountered as subjects. In so doing, Elizabeth's diary epitomises Ann Stoler's notion of a colonial

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<sup>80</sup> Simcoe and Innis, *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*, 103.

<sup>81</sup> Thursday, 26 December 1793, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 212.

<sup>82</sup> Thursday, 29 August 1793, *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>83</sup> Friday, 13 September 1793, *Ibid.*, 192.

archive as, “a force field that animates political energies and expertise, that pulls on some ‘social facts’ and converts them into qualified knowledge, that attends to some ways of knowing while repelling and refusing others.”<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth carefully crafted her narration of her own ways of knowing and being even as these were shaped and formed by the spaces she inhabited. For Elizabeth, her use of measurement and adjudication was consistent with what Edney identifies as an imperial obsession with applying precise and consistent measurements to its colonies.<sup>85</sup> From ways to calculate size and distance to imposing a consistent imperial calendar of time across space, this was a central component of administering colonial places and it is one of the central features of Elizabeth’s diary.

Elizabeth lived out the same imperial calendar in Upper Canada as the one to which her relatives across the ocean were bound. For Elizabeth, each experience in North America was weighted, identified, and filtered by her epistemology formed by her upbringing in England. The imperial calendar by which she measured her life, the metronome of Empire continued in an unbroken chronology to her existence in Upper Canada. This remained consistent despite the forms and shapes of time and space measurements that may have existed for the people she encountered along the banks of the St. Lawrence River. She broke down each entry in her diary by date. Regardless of her geographical place, the length of each entry, the amount of time between the event related and the date it was recorded, or the novelty of the information it conveyed, each

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<sup>84</sup> qtd. in Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 2.

<sup>85</sup> Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1.

entry began with the date it was written. The date included not only the numerical day of the month, and often did not even include the month, but it also listed the day of the week. There were even events and dates that marked her life in Upper Canada that were celebrated and in which Elizabeth and John participated in the happenings of imperial conquests or days of mourning along with their fellow citizens of Empire around the globe. These acts were not unrelated to her interest alongside her husband of the spatial colonisation projects in which they engaged. Giordano Nanni describes how pervasive this practice was throughout the process of colonisation and how insidious its application proved to be. She describes the “colonisation of time” and argues that while it “may at first appear of minor importance when compared to some of the well-documented policies of physical coercion characterizing Europe’s imperial expansion, traditionally conceived of primarily as a territorial, and thus spatial, project,” that “the ability to impose the observance of specific timetables, rituals and routines—from the Law of the Sabbath to the seasons of the year—embodied a highly significant aspect of Empire.”<sup>86</sup> This act of demarcating time in an imperial manner on the colonial space was a permissive act towards “each and every activity, including merely moving across the land... the need to acknowledge and historicize western time’s nature.” This undertaking

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<sup>86</sup> Giordano Nanni, “Time, Empire and Resistance in Settler-Colonial Victoria,” *Time & Society* 20, no. 1 (2011): 7.

took place in a hegemonic environment of a significant expansion of Western European culture.<sup>87</sup>

The importance of the imposition of a continuous and universal imperial timeframe was crucial to the expansion of Empire both in Upper Canada and in Australia, of which Nanni describes. Imposing external timeframes on colonial spaces was always an act of imperialism. Elizabeth actively participated in acting out the imperial calendar during her stay in North America. There was no sense of a self-conscious imposition of a system of time, but rather she related it as her unbroken connection to an external, universal truth. This is the very act of imperial hubris, especially in the Age of Enlightenment: that one kind or system of knowledge simply is and exists outside of any other kind of place or regardless of any other kind of epistemology. Occasionally, she was even flippant with her connection to the Empire and its extensions. She described her annoyance with the rodents in her tents and exclaimed, “The ground mice are innumerable and most troublesome here. We want the edict published in Spain to excommunicate and banish them.”<sup>88</sup>

She and John acted out imperial time in this colonial space consistently throughout their stay. In August of 1793, while they were in Niagara, her entry read: “Sat. 24th—The Governor has received an official account of the Duke of York having distinguished himself in an action in Flanders by which the French were dislodged and driven out of Holland. The Governor ordered a royal salute to be fired in commemoration

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<sup>87</sup> Nanni, “Time, Empire and Resistance in Settler-Colonial Victoria,” 7

<sup>88</sup> Wednesday, 2 October 1793, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 196.



of this event, and took the same opportunity of naming this station York...” She went on to describe the guns they fired off to commemorate the event and wrote of “a party of Ojibway Indians here, who appeared much pleased with the firing. One of them, named “Great Sail” took Francis in his arms and was much pleased to find the child not afraid, but delighted with the sound.”<sup>89</sup> Her son Francis was secure in his place within the Empire: his reaction to the sound of guns firing was delight. His position seemed to him secure and the sound of gunfire was to him celebratory rather than threatening. John’s decision to name a place York after an imperial victory was related to them from the continent was consistent with this idea of their assumptions of an immediate and unbroken imperial time. The reality that this victory actually occurred nearly two months prior to the Simcoes receiving word of it, betrays the disparities of imposing an ideal of imperial “now” in an such a remote colonial place. This event was not the only indication of an idea of connection Elizabeth assumed to a consistent idea of imperial time. On 1 March 1794, she wrote, “The news received of the death of the Queen of France. Orders given out for mourning, in which everybody appeared this evening, and the dance postponed.”<sup>90</sup> Although Marie Antoinette was sent to the guillotine 16 October, the previous year, everything came to a halt; dances were postponed in Upper Canada in her honour, thousands of miles distant, four and a half months after she was executed.<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth and John and the others in their colony entered into mourning as if she had died

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<sup>89</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 196.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>91</sup> Marie Antoinette, *The Accusation, Trial, Defence, Sentence, and Execution, of Marie Antoinette, Late Queen of France. Translated from the French, Etc.* (Edinburgh: J. Elder, etc., 1793), 75.

the instant they heard the news.

Another one of the measurements she consistently employed was temperature. Having arrived in Québec in November, her diary related on Saturday, 7 January 1792, “Fahrenheit’s thermometer 23 degrees below.” As curious as ever, she described how she “rub[s] silk gowns with flannel to see the beautiful streams of fire which are emitted with a crackling noise during the cold weather.”<sup>92</sup> Two weeks later she reported that the “thermometer is 24 degrees below.” She seemed to have recorded the temperature whenever she had access to a thermometer, “We walked to the provision store before breakfast... The thermometer 3 degrees below.”<sup>93</sup> Far from complaining about the cold weather, instead she noted on 20 April that “As the cold weather and the short days leave us people cease to be sociable, and no kind of gaiety is continued but a few dinner parties.” She also recorded on the 29<sup>th</sup> of the same month, “Last week the thermometer fell 30 degrees in three hours and 54 in eleven hours.”<sup>94</sup> She even described the temperature when she was unable to measure it, whether it was indoors or out, though she lamented the times she was unable to measure it numerically. Thursday, 1 December she described as “A fine, clear day” when she “walked near three miles.” She observed “that the stoves are generally heated to an excessive degree... they said that [the Fahrenheit’s thermometer] had been at 86° at Chief Justice Smith’s a few evenings ago.”<sup>95</sup> The next day, she wrote, “I nearly fainted with the heat this evening, and was told that Fahrenheit

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<sup>92</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 74.

<sup>93</sup> Monday, 13 February 1792, *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>94</sup> Wednesday, 29 April 1792, *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

thermometer in this drawing room at one evening been at 100.”<sup>96</sup> Her first experience with the summer heat in North America “checked... the joy I felt in finding myself in spacious apartments... by finding the heat more insufferable than I had ever felt. The thermometer continued at 96 for two days.”<sup>97</sup>

By August, the Simcoes had arrived in Niagara and on Saturday, 4 August, she lamented, “The weather is so exceedingly hot that I am quite oppressed by it, and unable to enjoy myself.” Her discomfort was heightened because she was “sorry I have not a thermometer to ascertain the degree of heat.”<sup>98</sup> In August of 1795, she wrote that a Captain Smith “brought me a thermometer I had been long wishing for, and the Governor bought it off an officer going to England; almost immediately it fell out of my hand and was broken, to my great vexation.” Two days later she opened her entry: “The heat intense; if my thermometer had not been broken I might have ascertained it.”<sup>99</sup> The heat would have been more definable, and her discomfort may have been lessened had she been able to record its exact measure. Despite the fact that it seems Elizabeth never owned a thermometer of her own for more than a few moments, she keenly tracked and measured the temperature around her on thermometers to which she gained access as often as she could during her entire stay. Although occasionally she resorted to allowing the weather to be “so hot” or “excessive hot” she clearly preferred to measure and record her experience within this new climate by empirical and imperial scales.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 59.

<sup>97</sup> Sunday, 17 June 1792, *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>98</sup> Saturday, 4 August 1792, *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>99</sup> 26-28 August 1795, *Ibid.*, 289-290.

<sup>100</sup> August 1795, *Ibid.*

Elizabeth's watercolours are also evidence of the way she represented her experiences on paper; for her this did not always have to include words. "The tone and *air décidé* of the reader," she wrote of a service she attended in Québec, "the attention of the audience and the Flemish appearance of their figures would have afforded an excellent picture." Yet the next day, her entry was an approbation of Cap de la Magdelaine as "the most dirty, disagreeable receptacle for mosquitoes I ever saw." This experience left such a poor impression on her that she insists, "I take no sketch of a place I never wish to recollect."<sup>101</sup> This is a direct admission of the ways Elizabeth edited and groomed her entries carefully for her audience and for herself. Buss would agree that this action of self-mapping creates less a mirror of the world and self but must be experienced more as cartographic projects are: an imperfect and two-dimensional representation of something fuller that may only be known in some ways in a very different kind of topologic interaction.<sup>102</sup> Elizabeth maintained a keen focus on the mapping and knowing of the colony of Upper Canada, but this interest took a specific form and required significant editing.

The same kind of activity was present in her diary entries; Elizabeth was the purveyor of an idea of civilisation and she curated a museum of relics. These included bits of ideas and scenic landscapes that she deemed worthy of admission. The landscape, the people were possible subjects of her gaze, "On the road, we passed a group of Indians sitting around a fire near the river, which in this dark night afforded a good subject for a

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<sup>101</sup> 9-10 June 1792, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 91.

<sup>102</sup> Buss, *Mapping Ourselves*, 9.

picture.”<sup>103</sup> It is important that she allowed the “Flemish” appearance of the Québécois and the aesthetically pleasing grouping of “Indians” to be subjects of art when those individuals whom she pronounced as “civilised” were not subjects of her artistic gaze. The hybridity of the place of Upper Canada created unease for Elizabeth at times and the contours and topography of Elizabeth’s perspective on her world were altered through her encounter with the new spaces of Upper Canada. This anxiety and contradiction was apparent in the lack of consistency in her assessment of Indigenous people she encountered. She described, “Jacob, the Mohawk,” who “danced Scotch reels with more ease and grace than any person I ever saw, and had the air of a prince. The picturesque way in which he wore and held a black blanket gave it the air of the Spanish cloak; his leggings were scarlet; on his head and arms he wore silver bands. I never saw so handsome a figure.”<sup>104</sup> She mentioned Jacob more than once in her diary, always with admiration and a tone of surprise at his elegance and grace.<sup>105</sup> She frequently allowed that he and other Indigenous men may be “well dressed and [look] very handsome,” yet she also wrote of a “very pretty woman,” whom she qualified as “the only handsome woman I have seen among the Indians.”<sup>106</sup> While she admired their acumen in many areas of knowledge, they were always “other” to her, a subject to be considered and compared to “Englishmen.” She described an occasion on Wednesday 16 July 1794,

While we were walking in the garden this evening about 50 Indians, men and women, landed from their canoes and encamped outside the paling, brought on shore their luggage and made fires; they were met by

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<sup>103</sup> Sunday, 16 June 1792, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 94.

<sup>104</sup> Friday, 19 February 1795, *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 172, 304–5.

<sup>106</sup> Tuesday, 2 July 1793, *Ibid.*, 172.

a party of Senecas, who sat round their fire. All this passed with so little noise or bustle that we scarcely heard there were people near us. What a noise would the encampment of 50 Englishmen have made! But “Rein de trop” should be the motto of these people. Those who draw best and make no smoke without producing a marked effect may be compared to Indians who never appear to make one motion that does not effect the purpose they intend... There is always an appearance of distinction among these savages.<sup>107</sup>

This kind of admiration still relegated Indigenous people to a permanent place of alterity. It is a position that she allowed to be admired and studied but maintained a position of subsidiary knowledge and experience. Her gaze and assessments were always coloured and tinted with her own place within society and self. Elizabeth also appreciated the birch canoes that she saw used for transportation and related an excursion she was able to take in one: “We went at the rate of four knots an hour. I liked it very much; being without the noise of oars is a great satisfaction.” Elizabeth loved her exposure to new ways of moving and experiencing the world around her. This entry was a typical mix of imperial measurements of speed, alongside Elizabeth’s approval of the quiet way of moving through the water. She went on to describe how seeing

a birch canoe managed with that inexpressible care and composure, which is the characteristic of the Indian, is the prettiest sight imaginable. A man usually paddles at one end of it and a woman at the other; but in smooth water little exertion is wanting, and they sit quietly, as if to take the air. The canoe appears to move as if by clockwork. I always wish to conduct a canoe myself when I see them manage it with such dexterity and grace. An European usually looks awkward and in a bustle compared with the Indian’s quiet skill in a canoe.<sup>108</sup>

This marks one of the many entries where Elizabeth described her interest in and

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<sup>107</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 229.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

approval of the Indigenous peoples' interaction with their space even over and above her own. Despite her admiration of them, she continued to presume a kind of epistemological superiority by employing imperial measurement systems on their methods of transportation.

Most often the people she encountered were subjects of her artistic eye: "I sketched a Caughnawaga Indian today whose figure was quite antique," she wrote from York on Monday, 6 January 1794, "I have often observed (but never had more reason to do than today) that when the Indians speak, their air and action is more like that of Roman or Greek orators than of modern nations. They have a great deal of impressive action, and look like the figures painted by the Old Masters."<sup>109</sup> Elizabeth often considered the Indigenous people picturesque from her first encounter with them until the last and she often wrote of them with admiration and respect. They were "antique," or "figures painted by the Old Masters," like an impression she conveyed of a family who visited who "grouped themselves like Van Dyke's family pictures."<sup>110</sup> This is significant because she did not always admire the people she encountered. Although she was pleased on one of her trips down the St. Lawrence, to reunite with a woman who "recognized and welcomed me with her usual French politeness [and who] had been educated at a convent," Elizabeth was not impressed by this woman's "husband [who] is quite

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<sup>109</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 213. It is not clear who this "Caughnawaga" man was, but Elizabeth's use of that name and the resettlement that occurred at the end of the American Revolution suggest that it might have been a person who belonged to the Kanien'kehá:ka (earlier called "Mohawk").

<sup>110</sup> Monday, 2 December 1793, *Ibid.*, 210.

uncivilized.”<sup>111</sup> She also did not approve of certain Anishinaabe, “Mississaga [*sic*] Indians,” she encountered in Kingston in July of 1792. “They are an unwarlike, idle, drunken, dirty tribe. I observe how extremes meet. These uncivilised people saunter up and down the town all day with the apparent nonchalance, want of occupations and indifference that seems to possess the London beaux in Bond Street.”<sup>112</sup> These people were to her “uncivilised,” but she still compared them to Englishmen she had observed in London.

There are few things that Elizabeth censured as “dirty.” These were usually dwellings or places and she described the weather one February day as “damp dirty and mild,” but the previous example was the only time she described Indigenous people to be dirty.<sup>113</sup> There were other individuals, however, whom she allowed to be dirty, including Europeans. “The Duke de Liancourt [a Frenchman] ...Mr. Gilmard, an Englishman, a French naval officer named Dupetit-Thouars, and M. de Blaçons. Their appearance is perfectly democratic and dirty... I dislike them all.”<sup>114</sup> Here she encountered Europeans who were uncivil, and worse, democratic. Although she never admitted any Indigenous people into her societal approbations, she described with affection that her son Francis, “Being three years old, he was dressed in a rifle shirt and sash, which gave him somewhat the air of an Indian,” and three days later that “Some Seneca Indians [Onondowagah] came here from the northern part of the State of New York. Francis went to see them

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<sup>111</sup> Tuesday, 23 September 1794, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 257.

<sup>112</sup> Tuesday, 3 July 1792, *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 46, 100, 106, 216, 289.

<sup>114</sup> 22-29 June 1795, *Ibid.*, 278.



dance and, afterwards imitated their dancing and singing surprisingly well.”<sup>115</sup> She expressed pride and approval of her child’s manners imitating the Indigenous people, and in another instance noted that “He shakes hands with the Indians in a very friendly manner, tho’ he is very shy and ungracious to all his own countrymen.”<sup>116</sup>

Elizabeth’s entries often included seamless transitions between her own first-hand observations and those that she learned from others, primarily from her husband. Her interest in the Indigenous people she encountered included both kinds of descriptions. She related that “The Mississauga [Anishinaabe] arrived with 270 Indians from St. Regis. They belong to the tribes called the Seven Nations of Canada.” This kind of factual observation she followed with the assessment that “They speak French, are much civilized and have a good deal of the manners of Frenchmen.”<sup>117</sup> These observations are one of a few that were clearly second-hand from her husband, and yet she incorporated them into her diary in her voice as if she had been present. She was as curious in them as was he; the next day she described, “I walked to the camp. The Governor went to Navy Hall. I drank tea with Mrs. Hamilton, and saw the Seven Nations pass.”<sup>118</sup> She also had a close relationship with Mr. Talbot who was intimately aware of the Governor’s priorities. She noted on “Fri. 12<sup>th</sup>—Mr. Talbot dined with me on his way to Fort Erie.”<sup>119</sup> While this included no mention of their conversation, her keen awareness of his mission and her

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<sup>115</sup> 7-10 June 1794, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 228.

<sup>116</sup> Monday, 2 December 1793, *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 175. See also Jean-Pierre Sawaya, *Les Sept-Nations du Canada et les Britanniques, 1759-1774: alliance et dépendance* (PhD Thesis, Université Laval, 2002).

<sup>118</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 176.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

familiarity with the negotiations at hand makes it clear that she was connected to the kinds of work her husband undertook.

Elizabeth's "imperial eye" was less global and transcendent than she allows. In this chapter I have emphasised the "situated, partial, local" components of the claims of knowledge Elizabeth made for herself and for her husband.<sup>120</sup> For example, while the Simcoes were still in Niagara at the end of June in 1793, there was a significant meeting of Commissioners from the United States and many Indigenous people who convened in Niagara to negotiate treaties and specifically borders. This event occupied Elizabeth's thoughts and filled her diary. On Sunday, 23 June 1793 her entry simply read, "Mr. Talbot went to Sandusky to deliver papers to Coll. McKee."<sup>121</sup> Mr. Talbot was an aide to John and his movements figured largely in Elizabeth's entries, not least because he reflected the actions that her husband prioritised. Three days later, she stated that "the Indian Commissioners went to Fort Erie."<sup>122</sup> The summer was warm, and Elizabeth grew concerned for Francis' health; she worried that "the extreme heat of this place is thought to be prejudicial to him." She and Francis left to camp in the mountains and she wrote that the "Governor will come to see us whenever he has leisure."<sup>123</sup>

"The Governor came to dinner" that night, and Elizabeth went on to record that "The Indians have demanded whether the Commissioners have full powers to fix a

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<sup>120</sup> Felix Driver and Luciana Martins, "John Septimus Roe and the Art of Navigation, c. 1815-1830," *History Workshop Journal* 54, no. 1 (2002): 158.

<sup>121</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 171.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

boundary; they are to reply tomorrow.”<sup>124</sup> Intermixed with her concerns for her son’s health, her descriptions of the heat and the plans and provisions she made for her family, her diary remained full of the kinds of negotiations that consumed the Governor’s interest; it was from him that she derived her information to populate many of her entries. This adjudication in which the Commissioners from the States and the Indigenous tribes were negotiating was full of the primary interests of imperial expansion and power. Not only were boundaries being negotiated, but the very notion of who possessed the authority to fix said boundaries was being openly contested. Another couple of days passed before Elizabeth made the note that “Another Indian council [was] held today at Navy Hall, at which the Commissioners declared that they had full power to fix a boundary.”<sup>125</sup> There is no commentary here, no editorialising around whom Elizabeth assumed to have power, but the next day she wrote that “It was determined in the Indian Council today that the Commissioners and Indian deputies shall go to Sandusky to treat. The Seven Nations having no conductor or officer with them, Mr. Talbot will accompany them to Sandusky.”<sup>126</sup> These negotiations were not fully successful, and John desired to facilitate the outcome by sending his aide along with the parties to continue their treaty negotiations.

Although Elizabeth’s written words in her letters and diary entries do indeed offer poignant glimpses of the physical and social spaces of Upper Canada at the end of the eighteenth century in beautiful and intriguing ways, what these speak most clearly to are

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<sup>124</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 171.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

her own assumptions of the imperial space both administratively and physically that she and John inhabited. Her own confidence in her ability to act as purveyor of knowledge and to catalog and record the places, people, and epistemologies she encountered never wavered throughout the diary. She produced maps, painted watercolours, read, and wrote descriptions of persons and places during her stay in North America. These were not idle “private” activities that were relegated to her as a woman. Elizabeth actively participated as an imperial actor, along with her husband John, in creating a “true” representation of the colony, through written records and in maps and drawings, for the purposes of Empire.<sup>127</sup> The following chapter expands on the deeply intertwined nature of surveying and mapmaking for the goals of governance and how these efforts were developed in North America and in Europe.

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<sup>127</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 184–186.

## Chapter Four: Surveying as an Extension of Imperial Power

*Every map manifests two sets of rules. First there are the cartographers' rules, and we have seen how these operate in the technical practices of map-making. The second set can be traced from society into the map where they influence the categories of knowledge. The map becomes a 'signifying system' through which 'a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored.' Maps do not simply reproduce a topographical reality; they also interpret it.*

–Brian Harley (2001).<sup>1</sup>

Scholars across the disciplines have observed the intersection between map-making and governance; specifically they have demonstrated that the production of maps has been useful to those who wish to exert control and governance over territory.<sup>2</sup> This practice was especially poignantly demonstrated by governments like rulers of the Roman Empire who, according to Roger Kain and Elizabeth Baigent, “had a well-developed sense of map consciousness, seeing cadastral maps as a means by which they could exert and maintain control over the land resources of their far-flung dominions.”<sup>3</sup> The Romans’ use of maps is important within the context of map-making and governance because it is an example of those who sought to extend their control over places largely unknown to them.<sup>4</sup>

Even though depictions of spaces have been important to governance,

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<sup>1</sup> J. Brian Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. Paul Laxton (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Francis Harvey, “Maps and Governance,” eds. Robert Kitchin and Nigel Thrift, *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2009); Jeffers Lennox, *Homelands and Empires: Indigenous Spaces, Imperial Fictions, and Competition for Territory in Northeastern North America, 1690-1763*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Roger J. P. Kain and Elizabeth Baigent, *The Cadastral Map in the Service of the State: A History of Property Mapping* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 45.

administrators of these efforts were not always particular about the accuracies of the depictions, as long as these two-dimensional representations of space were useful for the purposes of the extension of control over space. Jeffers Lennox, writing about the British in Nova Scotia in the eighteenth century, phrases it this way: “[m]aps and mapmaking reveal as much about the politics, personalities, and ideas behind their creation as about the physical territory they claim to represent.”<sup>5</sup> If technologies of territorial representation intersect with desires to govern, the forms these maps took in the mid-to-late eighteenth century in Europe and its North American colonies speak volumes about the intentions, beliefs, and aspirations of those who sought their creation.

This chapter positions John Simcoe’s ambitions to survey Upper Canada within the broader continental and imperial historical context of surveying and mapmaking. I consider the problems of space and the lack of surveying knowledge that the British possessed after the conquest of Québec in 1759, and I compare these concerns to the ways that John sought to map and to know the space of Upper Canada thirty years later. These surveying projects in North America did not neatly follow completed European efforts towards surveying, but instead they both developed in conjunction with the other. This chapter offers an historical overview of the development of surveying technologies, and I contend that projects in North America informed surveying in Britain just as surveying techniques developed in Europe informed the ways people represented geographies through cartography in North America. In eighteenth-century Upper Canada maps and governance were and are inextricably linked.

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<sup>5</sup> Lennox, *Homelands and Empires*, 254.

Michel Foucault's legacy is significant in this area of study. The mapping projects of the eighteenth century in Europe and in North America are part of the power/knowledge discourse around which much of his scholarship revolved. Foucault wrote about the centrality of the nexus also of time/space implications within wider scholarship, especially for historians: "it is necessary to notice that the space which today appears to form the horizon of our concerns, our theory, our systems, is not an innovation; space itself has a history in Western experience and it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space."<sup>6</sup>

Foucault asserts that the state and its endeavours are less about a bounded place, or "territory," over which to assert sovereignty. Instead, the kinds of endeavours a "government" about which he writes,

has to do with is not territory but rather a sort of complex composed of men and things. The things with which in this sense government is to be concerned are in fact men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc.<sup>7</sup>

Central to the ability to govern, he postulates, must be a kind of knowledge of those things and relationships that the state will govern. To this definition of the state Foucault assumes an application of his discourses of power; the state does not possess juridical power in this sense but its interrelational power is multiple, persuasive, heterogeneous and, of course, relational.<sup>8</sup> Foucault is most interested in the limits of the state as a

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<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, et al, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, 93.

<sup>8</sup> Colin Gordon, "Governmental Rationality: An Introduction," in *Ibid.*, 1-57, 3.

construct: “[t]he finitude of the state’s power to act,” summarises Colin Gordon, “is an immediate consequence of the limitation of its power to know.”<sup>9</sup> David Harvey and Matthew Edney are among those who focus their efforts on the ways the formation of states and especially Empires were inexorably linked to and driven by an obsession with increasingly accurate scientific knowledge.<sup>10</sup> It was not just a kind of philosophic awakening that created the early modern European state; it was the Europeans’ encounter with space and the problem of space, specifically in North America and Asia, that exposed to the European mind all that it did not know, and this vacuum precipitated an anxious response.<sup>11</sup>

David Harvey is a Marxist thinker for whom the space and time relationship is central. According to Harvey, cartographic representation without a sober acknowledgement of the dimension of time creates troubling distortions. He argues that “[h]ow we represent space and time in theory matters, because it affects how we and others interpret and then act with respect to the world.”<sup>12</sup> Not only does a critical reading of cartography matter, but also understanding what the expression of that language insinuates about the kind of knowledge it claims to represent is important to its usage. Harvey details the importance of shifts in spatial understandings to political and social restructuring during the Enlightenment period in Europe. He highlights the importance of

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<sup>9</sup> Gordon, “Governmental Rationality,” 16.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew H. Edney, “Monograph 54: The Origins and Development of J.B. Harley’s Cartographic Theories,” *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization* 40, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 1–143; Harvey, *Maps and Governance*.

<sup>11</sup> Edney, *Mapping an Empire*; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 27.

<sup>12</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), 205.



recognising the framework of space and time within the European feudal system where, he argues, “place assumed a definite legal, political, and social meaning indicative of a relative autonomy of social relations.”<sup>13</sup> This balance between space and time shifted dramatically, he argues, precipitated by the voyages of discovery that brought with them an increasing knowledge of the global back to Europe.

This exposure dramatically altered Europeans’ definitions of power that became “linked to personalized knowledge of, and individual command over, space.”<sup>14</sup> For Harvey, ideas of what space meant were directly informed by the increased knowledge, or even knowledge of a lack of knowledge, of that space; the spread and application of power within space was intimately supported by the making of maps. Knowledge is created by maps rather than maps expressing an essential “truth” about a space.<sup>15</sup> Harvey calls this perspectivism and links its prominence to the linkage of Cartesian rationality that in turn led to an increasing emphasis on “[o]bjectivity in spatial representation.”<sup>16</sup> The reason perspectivism is important is because it is the place of the individual that determines the perspective of the knowledge. Rather than a knowledge of space that is intimately linked with ways of knowing space, space becomes something that can be known from another kind of, deterritorialized perspective. Edney describes the shift that occurred when these new categories of epistemology began to differentiate between “physical as opposed to human features of the landscape,” a distinction that he identifies

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<sup>13</sup> Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 241.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>15</sup> Andrews, *Introduction: Meaning, Knowledge, and Power in the Map Philosophy of J. B. Harley*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 245.

as reflective of the “Cartesian dualism between mind and matter and the contemporary idea that the natural world is a stage for human action.”<sup>17</sup> European powers in North America in the mid-eighteenth century were engaged in this kind of endeavour, especially in relation to their surveying projects; from the Conquest of Québec in 1759 and their subsequent efforts to govern Canada until the time that John Simcoe arrived in 1791, these concerns were palpable, explicit, and deeply important to Europeans who wished to govern territory.

### **An Historical Survey of Surveying**

By the eighteenth century, Europeans’ concern with increasingly greater accuracy and knowledge of space both locally and abroad was linked to their enhanced abilities to more accurately ascertain fixed geographical characteristics like latitude. This obsession with greater accuracy in representing geographic space was also precipitated by their increasing awareness of their incomplete knowledge. These gaps in their ability to represent or place themselves spatially hampered their military ambitions, and these precipitated many of their advancements in surveying technologies. For example, British military exercises in Scotland in the 1730s and 1740s demonstrated the British government’s spurious and incomplete knowledge of that place, despite its relative proximity to its core and the many maps of Scotland it had in its possession. Historian Rachel Hewitt describes how a British map-maker in those years, “superimposed six existing maps of Scotland and in doing so he created a striking image of radical

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<sup>17</sup> Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, 44.

divergence and disagreement.” The inability of the British military to accurately identify an important location during the Jacobite Rebellion because of the discrepancies between these maps precipitated a significant national effort towards more accurate surveying, not just mapping.<sup>18</sup> The British government’s desire to have “truthful” and “accurate” depictions of space was precipitated by the European belief in the transcendence of technology; because greater accuracy was increasingly attainable, more accurate depictions were necessary to capture and to depict. David Nye goes so far as to argue that this obsession with technologies as salvation is an “integral part of contemporary consciousness,” and Nye connects what he calls the “technological sublime” to the ways that the “physical world [became] increasingly desacralized.” Under this shift, technology “represent[ed] a way to reinvest the landscape and the works of men with transcendent significance.”<sup>19</sup> The importance of this is its mandate: if one *can* know, one *should* know. The British undertook the official and systematic survey and mapping of the entire United Kingdom in the years following the military exercises in Scotland. Prior to this, European Empires had commissioned vast mapping projects, but Hewitt argues in her history of the evolution of the British Ordnance Survey, that “although many early modern national maps were potent emblems of power, control, ownership and nationalism, their accuracy was often highly questionable. Surveys of nations were rarely made by measuring the ground itself, which was a time-consuming, skilled and expensive process.”<sup>20</sup> The desire for continually more accurate mapping technologies and

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<sup>18</sup> Rachel Hewitt, *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey* (London: Granta, 2011), 3.

<sup>19</sup> David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), xiii.

<sup>20</sup> Hewitt, *Map of a Nation*, 10.

geographic representations in Britain, as well as in other European places, was always intimately connected with its military goals and was precipitated by their ability to scientifically depict and categorise geographic space.

The military implications of this for the British Empire, not only closer to home, but also in its distant colonies, as they expanded and deepened in the eighteenth century, are impossible to ignore. The maps that surveys could produce were necessary for the kind of security and military designs they had for places in their Empire. The maps they already possessed of British North America were insufficient for their plans and purposes, even though these maps were useful for the people who actually lived in the space and who navigated the geographies these maps depicted for more private or even for trading purposes.

There were many maps created of the North American continent before surveying became the standard for creating depictions of geographies and these were created and useful for a variety of purposes. Michel Witgen describes how the French created cartographic representations in the seventeenth century with the intention of making “Native America legible from an imperial vantage point” and to “place the colonial agent, as observer, at the center of a picture which purported to be the real world.”<sup>21</sup> Consider a comparison between Charlevoix’s map of 1755 (Figure 6) in Chapter Three, and Philip Bauch’s 1754 map (reproduced below as Figure 8) that included the inset map drawn by his Cree guide, Ochagach. Of the latter, Arthur Ray describes the canoe route depicted as

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Witgen, “The Rituals of Possession: Native Identity and the Invention of Empire in Seventeenth-Century Western North America,” *Ethnohistory* 54, no. 4 (October 1, 2007): 646.

drawn, “in a style reminiscent of modern bus—or subway-route maps” and claims that upon another unrelated occasion, “a very elderly man named Manteblanche, produced a nearly identical map.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Arthur J. Ray, *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People* (Toronto: Lester Publishers, 1996), 81.



Figure 9: Philippe Bauch, *Carte Physique des Terres les plus elevées de la Partie Orientale du Canada: Ou l'on voit les Nouvelles Decouvertes des Officiers Francois a l'Ouest du Lac Superior, Avec les Riveieres et ls Lacs dont M. Jeremie a parle dans Relation de la Baye de Hudson, (1754).*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Reproduced in Ray, *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began*, 81.

The scale of the map that two separate Indigenous men drew, the flattening of the landscape and the lack of cardinal directions that it imposed on the depicted waterways speaks volumes of the difference between their interaction with the geography and knowledge of it from what European surveyors desired and assumed about spatial interactions. The fact that it could be reproduced from memory by two separate actors speaks to a deep and vast oral history and knowledge of space far different, and arguably for a much different purpose, from the ways Europeans produced and subsequently made use of spatial representations of the continent, and specifically, of the waterways of the continent.

In order for the British, or other European powers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to either secure or to govern their distant colonies, an accurate depiction of the space that could be interpreted by someone who had never seen the territory and moreover a depiction that could be easily transported, was necessary. James C. Scott reminds us that the purpose for maps based on scientific measurements was specifically to make the local legible to an outsider located at a distance. Maps were designed by and for those who would never inhabit this space but who intended to rule it. He contends that “the completeness of the cadastral map depends, in a curious way, on its abstract sketchiness, its lack of detail—its thinness. Taken alone, it is essentially a geometric representation of the borders of frontiers between parcels of land.”<sup>24</sup> The surveys these British imperial actors desired—men who occupied the Colonial or Home Office who were charged with colonial spheres, men who were removed from the

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<sup>24</sup> Scott, *Seeing like a State*, 45–46.

place—were for a “thin” representation of the place that could be useful to them for governance. Their many requests for surveys and the maps they commissioned were because they were physically removed from the place itself; it was because they could not know without these tools.

Some of these surveys include those that the British commissioned in British North America following their conquest of the French in 1759. These requests, as Stephen Hornsby contends, reveal

several important features of the developing British imperial state. First, the metropolitan government was directly involved in the surveys... Second, metropolitan control was exercised through the military... Third, the surveys demonstrated Britain’s growing scientific mastery... Fourth, the surveys fixed and arranged the geographic space of northeastern North America in preparation for colonial settlement... Finally, [they] reflected Britain’s increasing global ambition.<sup>25</sup>

Surveying and map-making are not synonymous; maps have been produced in many ways and forms for thousands of years, yet scientific surveying activities as we know them today were still in their nascent expressions in the mid-eighteenth century.

Although their language projected grand ambitions, the copious amounts of documents meticulously catalogued in the archives of the British Empire reveal imperial actors that were always local.<sup>26</sup> They were always partial.<sup>27</sup> Each actor, no matter how well-connected or what his or her peerage, was as anyone else they encountered; they walked at the same speed or jolted along with the same kind of inconvenience in ill-suited

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<sup>25</sup> Stephen Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire: Samuel Holland, J.W.F. Des Barres, and the Making of the Atlantic Neptune* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011), 5–6.

<sup>26</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth century* (London: Taylor & Francis Books Ltd, 2003), 214.

<sup>27</sup> Felix Driver and Luciana Martins, “John Septimus Roe and the Art of Navigation, c. 1815-1830,” *History Workshop Journal* 54, no. 1 (2002): 158.



vehicles upon unwelcoming terrain.<sup>28</sup> If they were located in London, their knowledge was only informed by what they had access to in London. If they were not present in a colony, and especially if they had never actually visited it, they knew only of that space what information had been transmitted and communicated by sources they deemed to be trustworthy or “accurate.”

Even when these actors were present in these colonial spaces they groped blindly about in unfamiliar climes. This blindness created an obsession with better sight through representation of the place that crystallised in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This was the expression of their belief that physical space could be interpreted into knowledge that could be useful to their desire to govern it from whatever their own geographical place. Lauren Benton describes that although these were projected to be coherent zones of authority, they are better understood as spaces that were “politically fragmented...and encased in irregular, porous, and sometimes undefined borders.” She argues that, “[a]lthough empires did lay claim to vast stretches of territory, the nature of such claims was tempered by control that was exercised mainly over narrow bands, or corridors, and over enclaves and irregular zones around them.”<sup>29</sup> The representations the British imperial agents in London craved were those that could be transmitted on paper.

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the entries of 1-4 December 1791, and Wednesday, 7 March 1792, Elizabeth Simcoe and John Ross Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe: Wife of the First Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada 1792-6* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 58-60, 80.

<sup>29</sup> Lauren A. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400--1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1.

They desired surveys that were “accurate” enough to plot and plan without actually visiting the colony.

The further removed the centre of governance was from a place, and thus the more reliance there was on sources of knowledge to exercise rule, the better the surveying had to be. The thinness of the depiction that those in the centre desired betrayed their lack of any kind of real interest in the topology or essence of the space. Simply because there was a distinct French occupation and settlement in Québec prior to the English conquest in 1759, and also maps and reports related to this earlier imperial occupation, did not translate well for the British in terms of useful knowledge of the colony.<sup>30</sup>

This does not mean that the actions that imperial actors carried out or dictated from afar did not have deep and far-reaching consequences both spatially and temporally. Ian Baucom writes of the minutiae buried in the minutes of a bureaucratic meeting in 1783 that had grave and disastrous consequences to slave ships thousands of miles away. “The Lords Commissioners,” he describes, “do not emerge from these records as the architects of history, but as its petty clerks, accountants, and small claims adjusters.”<sup>31</sup> The newly-conquered Québec had to be translated into a medium that would fit into accounting forms that could be filed and stored by people at the Home Office in London. Nye reminds us that the ways in which Europeans and their descendants encountered the North American continent were informed by a time when surveying technology was

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<sup>30</sup> Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire*, 26.

<sup>31</sup> Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 5.

newly available to them. Rather than extending out from population centres to expand into their territory in the circular or organic manner that villages and cities in Europe have, the ability to project perfect lines and grids onto “unknown” spaces was an alluring and intoxicating notion.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time that the Jacobite rebellion in 1745 in Scotland demonstrated the British government’s lack of accurate depictions of space, the burgeoning science of surveying in relation to map-making was simultaneously being developed and honed. Stephen Hornsby contends in his book, *Surveyors of Empire*, that the Seven Years War precipitated a seismic shift in the balance of scientific prowess of European empires. He argues that by the conclusion of the war, “Britain began to wrench scientific leadership away from France, particularly in the realms of navigation, astronomy, exploration, and cartography.”<sup>33</sup> This technological development as the British consolidated power in the northern portion of their American colonies meant that this was one of the places where the Empire developed its surveying and focussed its efforts to accurately represent it.<sup>34</sup> British attitudes towards its North American spaces also shifted during this war; previously it had been seen as a space for a purely extractive economy—furs and fish, mostly—and maps like Charlevoix’s and Bauch’s were sufficient for these purposes.

During the Seven Years War in Nova Scotia, however, these settlements became increasingly more permanent, and as Jeffers Lennox contends, this created vitally “the

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<sup>32</sup> David E. Nye, *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 22–28.

<sup>33</sup> Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

connective tissue necessary to make Nova Scotia less a geographic fiction and more a functioning imperial plantation... [t]he British encouraged settlement and established an assembly to secure the province.” Lennox goes so far as to argue that permanent European settlements and a proximally located form of governance were both dependent “on increased territorial control and detailed surveys of lands inhabited by French and English settlers.” One of the greatest impediments to this was the presence of Indigenous people, in particular the Mi’kmaq. Although the British had succeeded in removing the Acadians, the vacuum this left mandated permanent, desirable settlement. The governance that they desired was one both designed to attract a population necessary of governing and one for which accurate maps was essential to secure.<sup>35</sup>

Samuel Holland arrived in North America from Europe in 1756, and over the next three decades not only did he participate in the important work of surveying geographies from Nova Scotia to Québec, but prior to that he had also assisted in mapping New York.<sup>36</sup> His mapping efforts were not part of an imperial project that expanded neatly from core to periphery; rather it was on this edge of an Empire where Holland adopted and even developed techniques and an acumen that were not yet widely employed in Europe at the time.<sup>37</sup> Tracing a genealogy of surveying reveals an interactive web of dissemination, not a neat projection of scientific methods outward towards colonial

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<sup>35</sup> Lennox, *Homelands and Empires*, 213–214.

<sup>36</sup> F. J. Thorpe, “Holland, Samuel Johannes,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1986), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/holland\\_samuel\\_johannes\\_5E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/holland_samuel_johannes_5E.html).

<sup>37</sup> Amy Turner Bushnell and Jack P. Greene, “Peripheries, Centers, and the Construction of Early Modern American Empires,” in *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500–1820*, ed. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3; Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire*, 8.

places from Europe. Previously, European efforts to create maps of North America had certainly only followed extensive mapping projects that had already taken place in Europe in the centuries prior, but the later act of producing maps from scientifically rigorous surveys did not. These more empirically based, meticulous projects occurred simultaneously and interactively. Holland's work in Québec and Nova Scotia was at least concurrent with, if not in fact prior to many efforts more local to the British imperial centre.<sup>38</sup>

Edney demonstrates how this was affected in other colonies like India where British efforts to survey the Asian subcontinent in the decades after their conquest in 1750. He argues convincingly that these efforts to accurately survey India as part of the Empire began between 1765 and 1771.<sup>39</sup> A central point of Edney's, however, is that identifying the exact date of the first modern Ordnance Survey is impossible. "None of the great topographic surveys," he argues, "came into existence fully fledged. Each grew and evolved in conjunction with the expansion of the responsibilities and the extension of the power and authority of their respective states."<sup>40</sup> Better surveying methods became more and more necessary to the British Empire as it expanded and encountered other places around the globe. Edney describes how the British, "undertook a massive intellectual campaign to transform a land of incomprehensible spectacle into an Empire of knowledge."<sup>41</sup> While scientific measurement and increasingly more accurate

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<sup>38</sup> Hewitt, *Map of a Nation*, 2; Lennox, *Homelands and Empires*, 212.

<sup>39</sup> Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, 17.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

navigation abilities facilitated Europeans' voyages in ships across the Atlantic Ocean to arrive in North America, their map-making and surveying abilities grew and developed concurrently as they sought to exert power over places at home and across the ocean throughout the later part of the eighteenth century.

### **The Importance of Technologies of Surveying in British North America**

“Even before the [Seven Years War] was finished,” writes Hornsby, “the British army instituted the Survey of Canada, the first large-scale topographic survey of any part of North America. Samuel Holland played a central part in the survey and helped produce maps for George III, wartime prime minister William Pitt, and leading generals.”<sup>42</sup> After the British conquest on the Plains of Abraham in 1759, Holland began this project of surveying and charting the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. That winter he worked alongside James Cook (1728-1779) and John Simcoe's father, Captain John Simcoe (c. 1714-1759), during their stop in Québec on one of Cook's first voyages of exploration.<sup>43</sup> Years later, Holland wrote a letter to the younger Simcoe describing this interaction, writing of the “many happy and instructive hours I have had the honor of enjoying in your late most excellent father's company.” He wrote that the first day they met, he was

surveying and making a plan of the place... I observed Capt. Cook... particularly attentive to my operations; and he expressed an ardent desire to be instructed in the use of the Plane Table ... Cook could not fail to improve and thoroughly brought in his hand as well in drawing as protracting, etc., and by your father's finding the latitudes and longitudes along the coast of America, principally Newfoundland and Gulf of St. Lawrence, so erroneously hitherto laid down, he was

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<sup>42</sup> Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire*, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Jerry Lockett, *Captain James Cook in Atlantic Canada: The Adventurer & Map Maker's Formative Years* (Halifax: Formac Pub, 2011), 13.

convinced of the propriety of making accurate surveys of those parts. In consequence, he told Capt. Cook that as he had mentioned to several of his friends in power the necessity of having surveys of these parts and astronomical observations made as soon as peace was restored, he would recommend him to make himself competent to the business by learning Spherical Trigonometry... at that period, of which Mr. Cook, assisted by his explanations of difficult passages, made infinite use, and fulfilled the expectations entertained of him by your father, in his survey of Newfoundland.<sup>44</sup>

In this letter, Holland was clearly responding to a query regarding his father from the newly inaugurated Lieutenant Governor. This interaction appears particularly poignant for John because his father died at sea shortly after this interlude with Holland. A notation in John's handwriting on the back of the letter reads that, "Major Holland told me that my father was applied to know whether his body should be preserved to be buried on shore, he replied, 'Apply your pitch to its proper purposes; keep your lead to mend the shot holes and commit me to the deep.'"<sup>45</sup> On their journey from England to take up his post as Lieutenant Governor in 1791, John and Elizabeth Simcoe passed near the Louisburg harbour where his father had spent his last few months. Elizabeth described the emotions John experienced at this time; she wrote that he was "particularly disappointed" when their ship's path did not take them close enough for a clear view, and that he was "very sorry he had not seen that harbour, so often mentioned in his father's papers."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Samuel Holland, Québec, 11 January 1792 to Lt.-Governor Simcoe, York: Rev. H. Scadding, *Surveyor-General Holland* (Toronto, 1896), 3–4.

<sup>45</sup> Scadding, *Surveyor-General Holland*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> 29-30 October 1791, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 48.

The interconnectivity of Samuel Holland and James Cook to John's father underscores the ways that John brought a deep desire to better survey the place with him to his role in Upper Canada. Certainly also, the surveying methods Cook learned from Holland went on to influence his efforts on his famous subsequent voyages. Holland wrote that "on my meeting [Cook] in London in the year 1776, after his several discoveries, he confessed most candidly that the several improvements and instructions he had received on board the *Pembroke* had been the sole foundation of the services he had been enabled to perform."<sup>47</sup> Holland himself gained exposure and prestige from this interaction, both during his life and long after; Cook's depiction of Newfoundland is heralded as a great feat of surveying and lauded for its incredible accuracy.<sup>48</sup> These methods of surveying in the Canadas were interwoven with other global efforts; they were not an expansion of methods from a European centre to a North American outpost, but rather they were both in the process of being created in negotiation across oceans and vast landscapes. The desire to know in the specific ways that surveying enabled was indubitably an early modern ideal and a European import to the Americas. The process of surveying and the ways that it developed, however, was much more of a collaborative effort and it was precipitated by the expanse of unknown geography. Surveying was an imperial project, but it was always affected locally. Miles Ogborn argues that "this dual sense of the geography of writing as simultaneously local and mobile ... can help to

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<sup>47</sup> Scadding, *Surveyor-General Holland*, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Lockett, *Captain James Cook*, 13.



rethink the nature of the connections between trade, Empire, and the written word.”<sup>49</sup>

Lennox also reminds us to continue to interrogate the political nature of all kinds of spatial depictions.<sup>50</sup>

Following the Royal Proclamation in 1763, British imperial actors believed that surveys were an absolute necessity behind any kind of expansion of authority over space in North America because these were places that were unknown to them. Technology that supported more accurate representations of physical properties onto paper was increasingly prioritized by Britain both in its domestic places and abroad.<sup>51</sup> Hornsby describes how these projects were focussed on the “continent’s coastlines and waters” and he reminds us how this underscores the importance of naval power to the Empire’s expansion. And yet, ultimately, it “failed to anticipate the outbreak of a land-based conflict in the American colonies.” Hornsby goes so far as to conclude that “[i]n many ways, the story of surveys serves as a parable of imperial power.”<sup>52</sup> The British underestimation of their own ability to control the thirteen colonies through naval power was an example of the incomplete knowledge they were able to gain through coastal-centric surveys that they had hitherto prioritised in North America.

In December of 1763, on the heels of the Treaty of Paris that ended the Seven Years War, the following directive was issued from the Colonial Office in London to the

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<sup>49</sup> Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 2007), 12.

<sup>50</sup> Lennox, *Homelands and Empires*, 213.

<sup>51</sup> Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire*, 11; John Crowley E., “‘Taken on the Spot’: The Visual Appropriation of New France for the Global British Landscape,” *CHR Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (2005): 1–28, 3.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

Governors-General of the newly acquired Province of Québec to conduct an accurate survey of the surrounding area “as soon as conveniently may be.”

You are therefore...in order to the advantageous and effectual settlement of Our said Province, that the true State of it should be fully known;... to cause an accurate Survey to be made of the said Province by such able and skilful Person as is or shall be appointed for that Service, who is to report to you in writing, for your Judgement in the Measures which you may in general pursue for the making of Settlements, not only the Nature and Quality of the Soil and Climate, the Rivers, Bays and Harbours, and every other Circumstance attending the natural State of it; but also his opinion, in what manner it may be most conveniently laid out into Counties, and to annex to his Report a Map of such Survey, with the several Divisions proposed marked upon it.<sup>53</sup>

In order to effectively govern the colony, imperial officials were keen to know its “true State.” They desired to have reports of this “accurate survey” and conveyed to them “in writing.” For its success, this endeavour had to be accomplished by an “able and ‘skilful’ Person.” The list of instructions they sent gives insight into the lack of knowledge they actually possessed of Québec when they “conquered” it. They were also explicit regarding the purpose of this survey; they needed to divide and categorize the geographic space for the purpose of governance. The scope of this project was to advance beyond simply the “Rivers, Bays and Harbours,” and they sought information necessary for governance, not just military control.

Prior to this, Brigadier James Murray (1713-1781) had already been charged with the task to oversee the better knowing of the place in 1762, three years after the decisive

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<sup>53</sup> Extracts from Instructions to the Governors-General Concerning Land, 7 December 1763, Alexander Fraser, “Third Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario, 1905,” in *Sessional Papers of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario: Second Session of Eleventh Legislature*, ed. Province of Ontario, Vol. 38:9 (Ontario, 1906), lv–lvi.

battle on the Plains of Abraham. The report he issued in response to this query included everything from “The State of the Fortifications” to “The State of the Government under the French Administration” to the “Nature of the Soil and its produce” and the “Population.” These accounts listed individuals that currently held local positions of authority within the existing Québec government and in them he also described the various laws and practices he observed to be already in place. What his account communicated was a description of the existent structures in place that he recognised and described in his report on the “State of Government:” these included formal positions, individuals, and customs that he deemed adaptable or suitable through which the British could exert power. There were also practices, individuals and knowledges that he believed to be insufficient because they were partial, incomplete, impracticable, or counter to the needs of the British Empire. One of these was the knowledge of the place, and under this category of knowing he sought accuracy from technology, and from a trusted purveyor of scientific method: “I order’d Captain Holland to take an accurate survey of the ground and have the honor herewith to transmit the several plans he has drawn in consequence.” Murray was one of many men who recommended Holland and his abilities for this purpose of Empire:

I cannot slip the opportunity of recommending this Gentleman to Your Lordship’s notice—He came to this Country in 1756, and ever since the siege of Louisburg I have been myself a witness of his unwearied endeavors for the King’s service, in a word, He is an industrious and

brave Officer, and an intelligent Engineer, in which capacity he would be desirous, and deservedly merits to be advanced.<sup>54</sup>

Murray offered his assessment that the present government the British were then inheriting from the French was in disarray. He used words like “disesteem” to describe the attitudes of the local Canadiens to the practices full of “so many abuses and inconveniences that the inferior jurisdictions” that were “mostly disused.”<sup>55</sup> He described his recommendations for rectifying these problems, and among other things proposed that the institution of “the Office of Grand Voyer [*sic*] or Inspector of the High roads, under proper regulations and restrictions seems to be highly necessary for the care and benefit of the interior Commerce.”<sup>56</sup> Murray was keen to survey the geography, but alongside this he expressed his desire to also discern the present forms of governance and sought ways to better exert British control over and through these. For furtherance of this, Murray relied heavily on producers of scientific knowledge that would augment and support this governance. From the beginning of the British conquest of Québec, Holland, as a candidate for Surveyor General, was an integral part of the Empire’s quest to know, to govern, and to project specifically imperial aspirations in the colony.

In 1764, Holland was officially appointed to be the first Surveyor General of Canada.<sup>57</sup> “From that time the work of surveying,” according to Alexander Fraser, editor

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<sup>54</sup> Sessional Paper No. 18, General Murray’s Report of the State of the Government of Québec in Canada 5 June 1762, Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, eds., *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 1759-1791*, Vol. 1 (Ottawa, Canada: Printed by S. E. Dawson, Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1907), 39.

<sup>55</sup> Sessional Paper No. 18, General Murray’s Report of the State of the Government of Québec in Canada 5 June 1762, Shortt and Doughty, *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada*, 1:41.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> These men’s names often accompany maps of Upper Canada that were produced at the turn of the nineteenth century by publishers in London, even though many of their surveying efforts took place in the

of the *Sessional Papers of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario*, “was carried on continuously by the several officials of the Surveyor-General’s department, among whom were John Collins, Philip R. Frey, ... Wm. Chewett, Patrick McNiff, James & Hugh McDonald, and Alexander Aitkin.”<sup>58</sup> Surveyors not only held this highest position, but the directive for the colony also included the instruction to: “oblige all such Persons as shall be appointed to be Surveyors of the said Lands in each Township, to take an Oath for the due Performance of their Offices, and for obliging them to make exact Surveys of all Lands required to be set out.”<sup>59</sup> It was of utmost importance to have surveys undertaken, but they deemed it necessary that these surveyors must also take up oaths for this office, and they were under strict obligation under oath for the work to be “exact.”

This was not unique to British actions domestically and many of its projects begun in North America impacted projects to produce surveys in Europe. George Raudzens traces the involvement by the military organisation, the British Ordnance Department, a branch of the military, in the development of British North America. Raudzens writes, that it was not until 1783 that there was the first “joint Anglo-French effort to fix the exact relative geographic position of the observatories of Greenwich and Paris by trigonometrical calculation.”<sup>60</sup> Raudzens describes these efforts beginning on the

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last two decades of the eighteenth century. Fraser, “Third Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario,” lxvii; Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire*, 9.

<sup>58</sup> 7 December 1763, Fraser, “Third Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario,” lxix.

<sup>59</sup> Fraser, “Third Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario,” lvi.

<sup>60</sup> George Raudzens, *The British Ordnance Department and Canada’s Canals, 1815-1855* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979), 16.

British Isles and then moving outward to encompass the more remote colonies, but this does not explain why, by 1783 Samuel Holland was already expanding his surveying efforts westward from Nova Scotia in British North America.<sup>61</sup> In Nova Scotia and in Québec, Holland was on the edge of the Empire spatially, but his methods and connections were at the heart of imperial plans and desires to more accurately depict its colonies. In 1770, he participated in a project locating Jupiter in various places throughout the Empire. He understood that his efforts and measurements were part of a larger kind of endeavour. He prefaced the measurements, “I have here inclosed [*sic*], Mr. Sproule’s observations, made at Gaspee [*sic*], with the steps he took relative thereto (which, I hope, will enable you to determine the longitude of his place of observation) with those of mine made at St. John's island, and Québec, which will be of great service to the business I have the honour to be entrusted with.”<sup>62</sup> Holland went on to inform the Royal Astronomer, “I have no materials for forming a general map of our surveys of the gulph [*sic*] and river St. Lawrence,” but that

I hope to complete the survey of the Northern district in a few years more; when I shall reduce our work to general maps and charts, with the exact latitudes, and with your assistance, the longitudes also, determined from our observations, compared with yours. Our survey of places and harbors of note, is by a scale of 2000 feet to an inch, and the other parts by 4000; after which it is reduced to a scale of two statute miles to an inch, or better than 8 64/100 inches to a degree of latitude. These maps I purpose making on a globular projection, considering the earth as a sphere. As, by the time I hope to receive your determination of the longitudes of the above places, I shall be ready for composing my

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<sup>61</sup> Fraser, “Third Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario,” lxxix; Raudzens, *British Ordnance Department*, 16-18.

<sup>62</sup> Samuel Holland, “XXI. A Letter to the Astronomer Royal, from Samuel Holland, Esq. Surveyor General of Lands for the Northern District of America, Containing Some Eclipses of Jupiter’s Satellites, Observed near Québec,” *Philosophical Transactions* 63 (1774): 171.

first map, I shall be greatly obliged to you for your opinion of the most useful and exact globular projection for a space contained between the 37th and 51st parallels of latitude, and between the 53rd and 78th degrees of longitude; which projection may equally serve for the separate maps, I may find it convenient to make of different parts of my district, as well as of the whole of it, which is comprehended in this space, but those charts intended for the use of the navy I shall compose on Wright's or Mercator's projection.<sup>63</sup>

Holland's surveying efforts in North America were always a part of a larger project and body of knowledge. Meticulously measuring the physical geography where he was present, he connected his local and geographically intimate work to global imperial projects. His intent was that these were to be used in combination and for "the use of the navy" and to be projected on a globe: a spatial description that places the local in relation to the global. He eagerly participated in the efforts to measure the place of Jupiter for navigation purposes by the Royal Astronomer because he believed the result would directly benefit his efforts to accurately ascertain longitude for his surveys. The methods he used in British North America were informed by developments in Europe, but his work on the periphery also served to refine and precipitate projects closer to the centre of the Empire.

Samuel Holland's work continued over the following decades nearly until his death in 1801, and he played an integral part in the work of surveying and mapping in the late 1780s whose results contributed to the decision to divide the province in 1791.<sup>64</sup> In 1783, his mandate was shifted towards the west, rather than where it had hitherto been in Nova Scotia. He and his deputy surveyor John Collins executed the surveys requested by

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<sup>63</sup> Holland, "XXI. A Letter to the Astronomer Royal, from Samuel Holland," 172-3.

<sup>64</sup> Thorpe, "Holland, Samuel Johannes."

the crown to facilitate the influx of refugees from the conflict to the South. Another survey was officially dispatched as well in 1786 by King George addressed to Lord Dorchester: “It is Our Will and Pleasure that immediately after you shall receive these Our Instructions you do direct Our Surveyor General of Lands for Our said Province of Québec to admeasure and lay out such a Quantity of Land as you, with the Advice of Our Council, shall deem necessary.” This action was directed towards “many of Our Loyal Subjects, Inhabitants of the Colonies and Provinces now the United States of America, [who] are desirous of retaining their Allegiance to Us and of living in Our Dominions, and for this purpose are disposed to take up and improve Lands in Our Province of Québec.”<sup>65</sup> By this time, Holland’s health was deteriorating and much of the work of surveying was being taken on by his deputies, like Collin. His position of prestige of respect as Surveyor General, however, was linked to his own personal reputation and the faithful service he had hitherto rendered to the Empire. By the 1780s the practice and profession of surveying was more wide-spread than when Holland had begun his work. In the Royal directives, however, especially following the Revolution of the Thirteen Colonies, there was a renewed focus on the role of Surveyor-General, and not simply the act of surveying. What must occur, following the loss of the territories in the South was an official mandate to uphold the desired structures of Empire in Canada. The dissonance

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<sup>65</sup> Instructions to Lord Dorchester, 23 August 1786, Shortt and Doughty, *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada*, 1:561.



between the official title and the actual work of surveying became increasingly exacerbated as Holland aged.<sup>66</sup>

As I argued in the second chapter, the physical geographical division of the provinces enshrined in the *Constitutional Act*, 1791 was intimately implicated in discussions between Lord Dorchester and the Home Office in 1788 and 1789 regarding the current scope of knowledge and state of surveying in British North America. Not only were these negotiations centred heavily on what was known about existing waterways, but the lack of other geographic information, and the contested nature of that which they both knew and could not verify was also highlighted, debated, and judiciously left out of the actual *Act* itself.<sup>67</sup> There were many similarities in the plans for the new province of Upper Canada that the recently appointed Lieutenant Governor John Simcoe communicated in the early 1790s to those directives contained in Murray's correspondence in 1762 as he had begun his task of taking over the governance of Québec. However, the provinces they stepped in to govern were completely different in composition because of their respectively disparate populations. From his correspondence it is apparent that John understood that the present and proposed population of Upper Canada would create a certain kind of problem of governance. For John the dual

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<sup>66</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Evan Nepean, Québec, 18 April 1792, Brigadier General E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada*, Vol. 1; 1789–1793 (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), 146–147.

<sup>67</sup> Grenville to Dorchester, No. 2, Whitehall 20 October 1789, Shortt and Doughty, *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada*, 1:663.

necessities of surveying the territory and populating it were always linked to one another and both were integral to his ability to provide security to the province.

As in 1762, when as Hornsby points out, “Maps of Canada were completely lacking ... Murray reported that ‘no chart or map whatever [fell] into our hands’ at the capture of Québec,” there was also a significant absence of maps available for the newly minted Upper Canada at its inception.<sup>68</sup> Although the British had expanded their surveying efforts westward by the time the Provinces were divided in 1791, these official efforts towards representation were far from comprehensive. The greatest difference, therefore, between Murray’s experience in Québec and John in his appointment to Upper Canada was the disparity in population and its state of settlement. In 1791, Lower Canada had some 150,000 inhabitants, while Upper Canada was settled by a mere 10,000.<sup>69</sup> Murray took on the governance of a significant population that already inhabited a territory that, however settled, remained largely uncharted and was thus unknown for imperial purposes. There were few territorial depictions in the form of either maps or charts available for either one of these men. J. P. D. Dunbabin explains how “in the 1780s Canadian surveys switched from their prewar focus to service this new settlement around Lake Ontario. Of the eighteen surveys between 1783 and 1789...all but one were of what became ‘Upper Canada.’” Of these, however, only a few “extended much beyond Kingston: the map admits that the Ottawa River above the Rideau, the south side of Lake

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<sup>68</sup> Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire*, 26.

<sup>69</sup> David J. Wood, “Population Change on an Agricultural Frontier: Upper Canada, 1796-1841,” in *Patterns of the Past: Interpreting Ontario’s History*, eds. Roger Hall, Laurel Sefton MacDowell, and William Westfall, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1996), 56.

Ontario, and the ‘Niagara River from the Falls to Fort Erie, Lakes Erie and St. Clair and part of Lake Huron are taken from Sketches only.’”<sup>70</sup>

As John stepped into the role of the first Lieutenant Governor of this new province, he discerned the vacuous nature of the territory both corporeally and abstractly. His correspondence both before he was appointed to this position in 1789-1790 and after he arrived in the colony between 1791-1796, brimmed with a cornucopia of ideas and ambitions that all reflected these dual priorities. Conducting surveys of the colony was a central feature of his ideas of governance both before and after he arrived in Upper Canada, but the reasons for this focus were even more central and explicit from the very beginning: surveying would assist him in his greater goals.

The manner in which these priorities would be affected, however, was always a point of contestation between John Simcoe and the Home Office, and especially with Henry Dundas, who was appointed as Home Secretary in 1791 and who adjudicated the budget for Upper Canada along with other colonies. Dundas was an influential man with the ear of the Prime Minister, William Pitt, the younger. Dundas was responsible for the delegation of resources to the far corners of the Empire and the management of all manner of colonial affairs. John’s belief in what Upper Canada needed for its development was unwavering, and his requests were directed at Dundas, but it was not upon Canada that Dundas was focussed during John’s years in office. Dundas was obsessed, instead, with India. John wrote to Dundas from his estate in England in August

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<sup>70</sup> J. P. D. Dunbabin, “Motives for Mapping the Great Lakes: Upper Canada, 1782-1827,” *Michigan Historical Review* 31:1 (Spring 2005), 1-43; 11-12.

of 1791 his opinion that “the Office of the Surveyor General is of the utmost Importance ... I should hope that this Post might be of those, which should be left to my mature Consideration & Disposal after I shall arrive in Canada.”<sup>71</sup> Only four days later, he had occasion to send another missive to Dundas and reiterated his opinion of the central importance of this position. He went so far as to qualify, “I am far from being of Opinion that it is necessary this Post should be filled by an Engineer or Military Man. It is of great importance to the tranquility of the Colony.”<sup>72</sup> While John was a man with extensive military background and these priorities of security were always foremost in his plans and designs for the colony, the position of Surveyor General was so important to him that he was willing to concede the qualifications of the appointee just to ensure its existence.

The reason this position was so prioritised by John was expressed plainly even in Elizabeth’s correspondence. In a letter to her friend, Mrs. Hunt, she referred her to a map with which both of these women were intimately familiar, having “so often drawn,” and lamented that “I find our maps to be little better than sketches, little of the country having been surveyed. The surveyors draw slowly, and, I am told, when they want to suit their maps to the paper, do not scruple cutting off a few miles of the river or adding to it.” John and Elizabeth had only lately arrived in the Québec, and in the same entry Elizabeth noted that her husband had found the acquaintance of “few men of learning or information.”<sup>73</sup> While the entry does not explicitly indicate by whom Elizabeth was

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<sup>71</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, London, 12 August 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:48.

<sup>72</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, London, 16 August 1791, *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>73</sup> Thursday, 15 March 1792, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 81.

“told” this information regarding the methods and execution of the surveys, her close contact with her husband, especially during their winter in Québec where he found few men with whom to socialise, it is likely that he was her source.

Even though John had conceded that he would not require a military background or that of a “professional” engineer to fill the position of Surveyor General that he desired for Upper Canada, this does not mean that he did not have high expectations for the quality and accuracy of the surveys that would result. He wrote to a peer as he languished in Québec in the spring of 1792 that “I impatiently wait for Military Authority, or the Gentlemen of the Council to proceed to Upper Canada.” One of the reasons he was so eager to travel to the territory was because “There are great errors in the Surveyor General’s Department, relative to the location of lands, which I hope to adjust amicably on my arrival in Upper Canada.” While he still had no word yet regarding the possibility of appointing a Surveyor General for the new Province, he had no hope in assistance from the man who held the position in Lower Canada. “Poor Holland, that good and faithful servant of the Crown,” he lamented, “is worn out in body, tho’ in full possession of his intellect.”<sup>74</sup> John was anxious to begin the work of governing the colony, and he viewed

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<sup>74</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Evan Nepean, Québec, 28 April 1792, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:146–147.

the paucity of accurate surveys at his disposal as an impediment to his desire to follow through on his copious and ambitious plans.

John's belief that the office of Surveyor General should be a priority for Upper Canada from the very beginning was not shared by Dundas, something that became clear when he wrote to ask for clarification in response to one of Dundas' directives: "In the list of Offices voted by Parliament as transmitted to me by your last Dispatch, Sir, I observe that of Surveyor General is marked without a Salary."<sup>75</sup> John apparently understood what this meant: that Dundas did not intend for the position to be created at that point. His appeal to Dundas' decision was ardent and comprehensive:

I conceive that there cannot be an Office of Greater Importance to the interests of His Majesty as Lord of the Soil, and to the several Inhabitants to whom He shall be pleased to grant respective Allotments—and to execute this duty ably and uprightly so as to prevent numberless lawsuits, that great bane of all infant Colonies, which would arise from a contract conduct, requires great Professional abilities and equal Integrity—It was on the conviction of the important Qualities necessary for this office, that I did not venture to recommend to you any of the numerous persons who applied to me for my offering them for this Employment—and I greatly fear thro' the incompetence of the persons whom Major Holland, that able Servant of the Crown, has been formerly obliged to employ in Upper Canada, I shall have considerable difficulty, if I may judge from the documents before me, in the preventing the most mischievous litigations.<sup>76</sup>

Although in this correspondence he warned against the dangers of leaving the position vacant, namely: that subsequent errors could lead to lawsuits, it is not a point John addressed often or with any kind of passion elsewhere in the records of his

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<sup>75</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, Montréal, 21 June 1792, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 172.

<sup>76</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, Montréal, 21 June 1792, *Ibid.*, 173.

correspondence. This argument seems posed instead to directly appeal to the priorities he thought would convince Dundas. John went on to detail: “There are at present in Upper Canada three assistant Surveyors ... and it is apprehended they will not be sufficient for the immediate calls for the arrangements of the Lands about to be granted—to Superintend a Department so extensive and Important.” John’s interest in appointing a full-time and dedicated Surveyor General was consistent with his focus on creating a stable settler society rather than simply manning forts and outposts or attempting to adequately survey the territory through the efforts of assistant surveyors. “It is necessary there should be a person of great ability,” he argued, “and of course, He must be tempted by an adequate and honourable Salary to undertake so laborious an Office...I shall at present direct the respective assistant Surveyors to continue their Duties till I receive your further orders and Decision on this material Point.”<sup>77</sup> Dundas’ response later that summer was dismissive and conveyed a vastly different priority than John’s: “It is proposed,” he wrote, “that the Surveyor General of Lower Canada shall likewise fill the same situation in Upper Canada, but without any additional Salary.” He went on to contend that “[t]he attention of the Surveyor General may certainly be bestowed at proper Seasons on both Provinces, and at other times I see no reason to doubt but Persons properly qualified may be found to perform the Duties of the Office as Deputy Surveyors.”<sup>78</sup>

This exchange highlights one of the significant features of the relationship between John Simcoe and Henry Dundas and demonstrates the disparity between their

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<sup>77</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, Montréal, 21 June 1792, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 173.

<sup>78</sup> Henry Dundas to J. G. Simcoe, Whitehall, 15 August 1792, *Ibid.*

visions for the future of Upper Canada. While both desired to retain and to secure this colony for the Empire, John believed that this would be done through active surveying and intentional efforts to settle and retain a loyal and stable population. Dundas' dismissals of John's requests to fund or support these efforts, however, was just as consistent. The next year, Dundas wrote a letter to John with a response even more curt and abrupt: "On the subject of a Surveyor General for Upper Canada I have given my Opinion in my Letter to You of the 15th Augt. 1792, to which I refer you on this Occasion."<sup>79</sup> The letter from John to which Dundas was referring is not included in the volumes of published correspondence, nor is it present in the unpublished transcriptions housed in Library and Archives Canada, but John's letters that preceded this one are full of reports of surveys he had undertaken and descriptions of his plans for his surveying expedition to Lake Huron. It is not unreasonable to presume that Dundas was responding to another direct appeal by John for the creation of this position.

The position of Surveyor General of Upper Canada would not be officially established until 1798, after the Simcoes had returned to England. At this point, David William Smith was finally granted this official title; although John ceased to appeal officially to Dundas for this role, he nevertheless did everything he could to ensure the surveys he desired so deeply were undertaken.<sup>80</sup> In October of 1792, three months after Dundas had written his final letter to John refusing the creation of the position, Smith

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<sup>79</sup> Henry Dundas to J. G. Simcoe, Whitehall, 2 October 1793, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 80.

<sup>80</sup> S. R. Mealing, "Smith (Smyth), Sir David William," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, Montréal: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1988), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith\\_david\\_william\\_7E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith_david_william_7E.html).



described in a letter to a friend, that because of “the knowledge I have of the Dy. Sur. Dept, the Govr. has thrust another troublesome task on my shoulders, for which I have neither salary nor fees—altho’ he has given me a Commission to act as Surveyor General till the King’s pleasure is known.”<sup>81</sup> It is not clear whether John had yet received Dundas’ letter when he delegated this role to Smith, though this seems likely. Regardless, he had made the decision to place Smith into this unofficial and unpaid position that Smith went on to hold for the next six years. Smith was often at John’s side during the rest of his stay in Upper Canada and he appeared in many of Elizabeth’s diary entries as well.<sup>82</sup> The weight behind these exchanges negotiating the importance of official titles and the budgets for them, as well as the amount of effort spent between the Home Office and those in the colonies is in the palpable and sometimes explicit disparity of opinion about what kind of colony this new Province of Upper Canada would be.

By contextualising how important maps, but more importantly, accurately surveyed maps, were to European actors, I hope to have illuminated some of the ways some of the Europeans, specifically British imperial agents at the end of the eighteenth century in Upper Canada, reacted to the geographic features of the vast “unknown” continent of North America and its inhabitants. These geographic realities and ways of being shaped and altered European behaviours toward the place that was “new” to them but it also changed the ways they then went on to encounter their older habitations and places in Europe. Georges E. Sioui, in his polemic work, *For an Amerindian Autohistory*,

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<sup>81</sup> D. W. Smith to John Askin., Niagara, 2 October 1792, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:231.

<sup>82</sup> E.g., Robertson and Simcoe, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 131, 152, 168, 184.

goes so far as to contend that this reciprocal interaction that occurred in the post-contact centuries was nothing short of an “Americanization of the world.” He argues that “[c]ontrary to conventional historical discourse, my premise is that ever since the ‘discovery’ of America, world society has been engaged in a process of ideological unification... whereby the essence of original American through it being communicated to the other continents.” Sioui describes that “on this continent where they [had] just come ashore, they should see spirit, order, and thought, instead of a mass of lands and peoples to be removed, displaced, or rearranged.”<sup>83</sup> Sioui links European actions towards the land itself, its removal, displacement and rearrangement, with their encounters with the Indigenous people themselves. These interactions with the people who were there and with the people they desired to be there, were inexorably linked actions towards claiming and exerting sovereignty over space.

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<sup>83</sup> Georges E. Sioui, *For an Amerindian Autohistory: An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), xxiii; Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*, 3.

## Chapter Five: Creating a Population and Territory

*What are we to make of the fact that so many Aboriginal people interested in history disseminate their ideas outside the academy? This fact poses epistemological, political, and paradigmatic questions for university historians. Does this choice relate in part to the mode of Western academic inquiry and to the Western knowledge project in general? When investigation of the conditions, attitudes, and experiences of First Nations has been a central component of the colonial project in Canada, some effort is required to reclaim academic inquiry and strip it of its oppressive connotations. Make no mistake—aboriginal people did not have to read Michel Foucault to understand the meaning of “hierarchical observation” and the ways that knowledge collection underpinned the control exercised over them by the Department of Indian Affairs... I believe that non-Aboriginal scholars can help advance this process by displaying more openness, innovation, and willingness to take risks.*

—Annis May Timpson (2009).<sup>1</sup>

On 7 February 1792, from his temporary post in Québec City, Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe issued a proclamation inviting settlers to the Province of Upper Canada, before he had even travelled up the St. Lawrence River to the newly designated space. His invitation was intended for distribution in the United States and England and John issued it under the “given Authority and Command to grant the Lands of the Crown.”<sup>2</sup> Alongside his priorities of surveying and mapping the colony, John desired a population to know, to govern, and to secure within Upper Canada. When John and his wife Elizabeth arrived in Upper Canada in early 1792, there were certainly already “persons” there towards whom the 1791 *Constitutional Act* was directed. These

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<sup>1</sup> Annis May Timpson, *First Nations, First Thoughts: The Impact of Indigenous Thought in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009), 33–34.

<sup>2</sup> John Graves Simcoe, *A Proclamation to Such as Are Desirous to Settle in the Lands of the Crown in the Province of Upper Canada* (Québec, February 7, 1792).

“persons” identified in the *Act* were Loyalists who had migrated north after the Revolutionary War. For example, the *Act* specified that the Legislative Councils should be composed of “a sufficient Number of discreet and proper Persons, being not fewer than seven to the Legislative Council for the Province of Upper Canada” and that these Members “shall be chosen by the Majority of Votes of such Persons as shall severally be possessed, for their own Use and Benefit, of Lands or Tenements within such District.”<sup>3</sup> These were the “persons” who composed the population for whom the creation of Upper Canada was intended, and they were also the persons who would occupy positions within the governmental structures.<sup>4</sup> But there were other inhabitants present by 1791 who did not warrant designation as “population” within the colony and who were not included in the 1791 *Constitutional Act*. They were people who possessed a different kind of intersection of knowledge and belonging, and whose relationship with the Empire did not fall neatly into the categories of “loyalty” or “connection to place” that the British sought to reproduce in Upper Canada.

This chapter examines the Simcoes’ interactions with people and places recorded in John’s correspondence, in the diaries of Elizabeth, and the writings of other men who accompanied John during his surveying journeys. The efforts these accounts recorded were twofold: John desired to establish a clearly defined and loyal British population. He also believed the mastery of the territory through accurate surveys and ultimately, engineering waterways, was necessary to fully exert sovereignty in the space. Towards

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<sup>3</sup> 31 Geo. III, “The Constitutional Act, 1791” (c. 31 (U.K.)).

<sup>4</sup> Gerald M. Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years 1784-1841*, The Canadian Centenary Series (London and Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1963), 23.

this end, as I argue in Chapter Four, John was intent on establishing a formal position of a Surveyor General and he pled ardently for support from the Home Office in his efforts to accurately measure and represent the territory. Both efforts were towards the end of creating a more secure and loyal territory, but both occurred in a place that was already inhabited.

John was at times explicitly aware of his interactions with the existing Anishinaabe, Iroquois, Huron-Wednat, Mississauga, and Odawa people. There are also examples of his lack of consideration of those who were present and those whose traditional territory the British had just designated “Upper Canada.” This was the territory where York would be established and that contained the many waterways John wished to control. As historians, our traditional archives do not include the same volume or capacity of accounts of this time and place created by Indigenous perspectives as we have of imperial voices. Scholars like Michael Witgen remind us that

narratives of discovery, as historical artifacts, actually teach us about the writer than speaking of the New World. What we witness is not the discovery of The Other—be it place, person, or thing—but rather the experience of the author confronting a radically different world. It is that experience, that confrontation with the unknown that the writers describe.<sup>5</sup>

Witgen’s scholarship focusses specifically on experiences in seventeenth-century New France. This chapter examines ways that his findings are also applicable to eighteenth-

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<sup>5</sup> Michael J. Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 25; see also, Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*, 1992; Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

century British experiences of imperialists like John and Elizabeth Simcoe. Similar to New France, Upper Canada was a newly formed Province with few posts and forts, and it covered a vast area a European Empire had designated as its own from afar. Witgen's exhortation is to not dismiss the authority of European sources or ignore what they reveal simply because of their significant bias, but rather to read them as an account of one side of the mutual changes that both Europeans and Indigenous people experienced.<sup>6</sup>

### **Towards Creating a "Loyal" Population**

As I argue in Chapter Four, efforts around surveying by the British Empire leading up to the 1791 *Constitutional Act* were more specific than they were in the 1760s in Québec. Still, they exposed what Felix Driver and Luciana Martins describe as the Empire's "incomplete and partial knowledge" of the Upper Canada, even while the intent of the 1791 *Constitutional Act* was to convey omniscience and to communicate power.<sup>7</sup> Both this decree and the 1774 *Québec Act* that I describe in Chapter Two were enacted within the tradition of ideas of authority over space imported from Europe. This was an extension of beliefs about how sovereignty over territory could be, indeed must be, exerted; it was no coincidence that the *Constitutional Act* that created Upper Canada in 1791 was created on paper.

These activities of defining a population and mapping a territory are linked in powerful ways. Francis Harvey contends that "without a map there is no modern

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<sup>6</sup> Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 34.

<sup>7</sup> Felix Driver and Luciana Martins, "John Septimus Roe and the Art of Navigation, c. 1815-1830," *History Workshop Journal* 54, no. 1 (2002): 145.

government.” If this is true, we must assess efforts towards mapping as a way of maintaining and presuming “authority and power of governance.” For Harvey, mapping is a key component of the ways that governments delegate “authority to nonhumans, mainly information technologies, as well as technological and regulative organizations of coordinated administrative activity.”<sup>8</sup> John Simcoe actively pursued this delegation of sovereignty to technologies throughout his stay in Upper Canada. While he was reliant upon the intimate and physical knowledge of space that the Anishinaabe, Iroquois, Huron-Wednat, Mississauga, and Odawa people possessed to “explore” places within the new colony, he simultaneously sought to produce “truth,” to foster a superior knowledge of space through “accurate” mapping and the use of surveying technologies. He assumed that measuring and charting the colony would enhance the Empire’s holding and sovereignty over Upper Canada in ways that not even the establishment of the government structure detailed in the 1791 *Constitutional Act* would do.

John was obsessed with the idea that engineered waterways were an answer to the colony’s problems of transportation and he was convinced that these could answer and assure of a kind of security to control, discipline, and to impose territoriality into the earth itself. It would be over two decades before any canal projects were begun in Upper Canada. Two of John’s biographers remind us that one of the reasons for the lag between his plans and desires and their fruition was that he was appointed Lieutenant Governor in the 1790s when the British Empire was reeling from the loss of the American colonies

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<sup>8</sup> Francis Harvey, “Maps and Governance,” in eds. Robert Kitchin and Nigel Thrift, *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2009), 432.

and it was cautious about its investments in its northern colony that remained in the Americas.<sup>9</sup> John's actions towards the colony, his vision for its development and his focus on the administration of the colony, its security, and its creation of a population outran his mandate and indeed they were anachronistic within the Empire itself towards its colonies and towards Upper Canada specifically. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Canadian colonies were not those on which the Empire was most focussed: India and the West Indies dominated much of their energies and investments after their loss of the thirteen colonies. John often encountered apathy and disinterest from the Home Office in his appeals for resources for this new colony.<sup>10</sup>

Regardless of the Empire's antipathy and reticence towards a heavy financial investment in Upper Canada, John was eager to begin his role as Lieutenant Governor of the new colony. As I examined in Chapter Two, he had ardently and actively applied for this position. In his application he even proposed that southern locations like Connecticut, but especially Vermont, were vulnerable to possible annexation. He used language that suggested that it would be possible for the Empire to entice them to join their northern colony. He claimed that although "Congress are anxious to attach Vermont to them," he

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<sup>9</sup> Mary Beacock Fryer and Christopher Dracott, *John Graves Simcoe, 1752-1806: A Biography* (Toronto; Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1998), 7.

<sup>10</sup> H. V. Bowen, "Perceptions from the Periphery: Colonial American Views of Britain's Asiatic Empire," in eds. Daniels and Kennedy, 283-300; Amy Turner Bushnell and Jack P. Greene, "Peripheries, Centers, and the Construction of Early Modern American Empires," in eds. Daniels and Kennedy, 1-14; J. A. Lovat-Fraser, *Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1916); Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Jack P. Greene, "Transatlantic Colonization and the Redefinition of Empire in the Early Modern Era: The British-American Experience," eds. Daniels and Kennedy, 267-87; Elizabeth Manke, "Negotiating an Empire: Britain and Its Overseas Peripheries, c. 1550-1780," in eds. Daniels and Kennedy, 235-66.



was confident that “Vermont will as much despise the allurements of Congress as they have hitherto disdained their threats, if it be assured of Canadian Alliance” especially if they were presented with the context of his bid to build canals to create easier access to the St. Lawrence River, and thence to the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>11</sup> John was bold, expansionist, and offered a clear vision for future development.

Among other things, this vision included canal projects as early as 1789. In a letter dated that year, he wrote, “My Father in a Momoir [*sic*] dated in 1755, many years before the Conquest of Canada,” expressed the opinion that

Such is the happy situation of Québec, or rather of Montreal, to which Québec is the Citadel, that with the assistance of a few Sluices it will become the centre of Communication between the Gulf of Mexico and Hudson’s Bay, by an interior navigation: formed for drawing to itself the wealth and strength of the vast interjacent Countries, so advantageously placed, if not destined to lay the foundation of the most potent and best connected Empire that ever awed the World.<sup>12</sup>

Prior even to his arrival, John had formed an idea of the potential of the position of this colony within the Empire based on his father’s impressions of the geographical attributes of Canada. He saw it as a place that could be a jewel for the Empire; he wrote in 1791 that it was “a Spot destined by Nature, sooner or later, to govern the interior World,” a place where its best and most loyal subjects would thrive and build a miniature England

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<sup>11</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Evan Nepean, Wolford Lodge, 3 December 1789, Brigadier General E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada*, Vol. 1; 1789–1793 (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), 7–9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. This quotation appears in Cruikshank’s Volume 1 of John Simcoe’s published correspondence and includes the citation that this quotation is also reproduced, albeit in a slightly different form, in a letter to Lord Barrington in which John was “strongly advocating the conquest of Canada, [and] was printed in the *Thirteenth Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario*, 1916, pp. 137-44.”

across the ocean.<sup>13</sup> Convenient access to the Atlantic Ocean and its transportation possibilities had left the majority of the population of the American Colonies strung along the eastern coastline. By contrast, the British Empire's control over the wealth of furs and other resources in the continent's interior would ensure the central importance of Upper Canada.

The response that the geographic realities of the North American continent evoked from Europeans like John Simcoe had everything to do with their reciprocal penetration, mapping, and the subsequent conquest and sculpting of the land; most specifically this was evinced through the engineering that he and other Europeans desired for the waterways in Upper Canada. British military historian John Keegan captured this well in his description of his own visits to North America and through the ways that he viewed this vast geography with the eyes of one whose perspective was formed by the battlefields of Europe:

I know that every straight line, mathematical curve, sharp edge, softened gradient, flattened contour, raised hollow, rectilinear river-course tells of the effort of man's [*sic*] labour on the face of the continent... [the landscape] has awoken in me a powerful and continuing curiosity in what it means for what I do. I am a military historian... Rivers, mountains, forest, swamp and plain, desert and plough, valley and plateau: these are the primary raw materials through which the military historian works. In constructing a narrative, in charting the movements of armies, the facts of geography stand first.<sup>14</sup>

One of Keegan's primary questions when he encountered Lake Ontario was how

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<sup>13</sup> J.G. Simcoe to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 January 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793, 17-19.

<sup>14</sup> John Keegan, *Fields of Battle: The Wars for North America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1996), 7–8.

transportation was possible thence from Lake Erie. His military and historical background led him to understand implicitly that the Welland Canal must exist to traverse Niagara Falls even though he had never heard its name. Keegan, writing at the end of the twentieth century, could have been describing John Simcoe's perspective as he encountered the landscape of Upper Canada in the late-eighteenth century because John embodied European military and political aspirations towards the place that were deeply influenced by the assumptions of power and territory in Europe at the time.

John Simcoe wrote W. W. Grenville a letter following up on a conversation that had left "very deep & painful impression" upon John that Grenville had no intention of establishing a colonial force in Upper Canada. While John vigorously argued for the necessity of this kind of military establishment, he also articulated his priority of creating "various public Works, of Buildings, Roads, Bridges, & Communications, as well by Land as on the Water," to

establish his Majesty's Government in the shortest possible time upon the most solid foundations, by these Works, The Internal Parts of that Country will be opened to the Emigrants; a competent Number of the Inhabitants will be collected in a central Situation proper for a Capital... The great purposes of Civilization, of union of Force & of Communications for commercial & political Purposes in which Canada has hitherto been eminently defective.<sup>15</sup>

For John, the creation of these public works and engineering feats would facilitate governance he saw as necessary. In his estimation, success was at least somewhat dependent on the introduction of a military force to safeguard this communications

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<sup>15</sup> J. G. Simcoe to the Right Honorable Lord Grenville, endorsed: (without date), Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 53–54.

network. He wanted to bring “civilisation” to the wilderness and to create a thriving centre for transportation of the treasures the continent could provide. Not only this but he also wanted to build and develop ideas and society where there was presently “nothing.” His father had seen its geographic potential in his prior travels, and John was enthralled with the idea of following through on these possibilities with his appointment as Governor. Civilisation, for John, would be possible to engineer through “Public Works” projects specifically around the governance of waterways and bodies of water in the colony. Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) had promoted for the thirteen colonies that agriculture was the endeavour which would bring civilisation, but it was not efforts towards agriculture that John endorsed, but rather to physically alter and civilise the landscape itself.<sup>16</sup>

Duke François-Alexandre-Frédéric La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, a Frenchman who visited the Simcoes during their stay in Niagara in 1795, wrote of John that he “is acquainted with the military history of all countries; no hillock catches his eye without exciting in his mind the idea of a fort, which might be constructed on the spot; and with the construction of this fort he associates the plan of operations for a campaign, especially of that which is to lead him to Philadelphia.”<sup>17</sup> John’s military background and his belief in the benefits of mastering the landscape for purposes of security, deeply

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Thomas Jefferson to the Senate and the House of Representatives, 18 January 1803,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg, Vol. 39 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 350–354.

<sup>17</sup> François-Alexandre-Frédéric La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797: With an Authentic Account of Lower Canada*, ed. Henry Neuman (London; T. Hurst and J. Wallis, Paternoster-Row, and by Carpenter and Co. Old Bond-Street: Printed for R. Phillips, no. 71, St. Paul’s Church-Yard, by T. Davison, Lombard-Street, Fleet-Street, 1799), 241.

influenced the ways he focussed his work and efforts in Upper Canada. La

Rochefoucauld-Liancourt also described John as

just, active, enlightened, brave, frank, and possesses the confidence of the country, of the troops, and of all those who join him in the administration of public affairs... his favourite topics are his projects and war, which seem to be the objects of his leading passions. ...On hearing his professions for an earnest desire of peace, you cannot but suppose, either that his reason must hold an absolute sway over his passion, or that he deceives himself.<sup>18</sup>

John was focussed on disciplining the landscape to better facilitate transportation and circulation for the purposes of security; these are activities that Foucault links explicitly to governance.<sup>19</sup> John was determined that this would be how he would encounter the landscape even before he embarked for Upper Canada and his first encounters with its actual topography only served to heighten and deepen this desire to increase better transportation in the Province by engineering waterways.

John saw great potential in the nascent colony of Upper Canada, but he also admitted to an awareness of the many obstacles that lay ahead. For him, these included security, political and cultural vacuums, and not least, transportation and economic considerations. “The Indian is the formidable Enemy in our present Juncture of Affairs” he wrote in a letter to Dundas, “because He has nothing to lose & is full of Martial Science & Spirit adapted to the nature of the Country—& because from being as he is at present our Friend, his Enmity would proportionally be lasting as it must arise from his

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<sup>18</sup> La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada*, 241.

<sup>19</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: St Martins Press, 2009), 19-21.

*absolute belief* of our Weakness.”<sup>20</sup> He went on to relate that the geographic realities of the continent continually occupied his considerations of securing and exerting power over

Upper Canada:

In regard to Power, Detroit delivers the navigation of Lakes Erie, Huron & Superior into the hands of the Americans by the natural effect of the Possession of its Commerce—Oswego & Carleton Island will give them Lake Ontario & the naval Force on these Lakes will leave our Settlements on the opposite shores subject in case of War to serious annoyance.<sup>21</sup>

These “annoyances” were not simply the possibility of an aggressive action by the United States’ military but from the insidious political ideas that might seep over the porous borders between the two places. Water communication carried more than just troops and weapons; the circulation of republican ideals, what he called “wild and phrenetic democracy,” constituted for John an existential threat to the security of Upper Canada as an outpost of the Empire.<sup>22</sup> American control over waterways and transportation was an existential threat to more than just the physical borders of Upper Canada.

John’s ambitious plans for the Province did not go unnoticed by his colleagues. As Governor General of British North America, Lord Dorchester was in a position of authority over John. He had opposed John’s appointment as Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada partially because of John’s outspoken zeal. One of Dorchester’s biographers assesses that he viewed John as, “an impetuous and perhaps insubordinate

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<sup>20</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, London, United Kingdom, 16 August 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 51. Emphasis original.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Alured Clarke, Navy Hall, 5 April 1793, Ibid., 310.

upstart.”<sup>23</sup> He describes that “Dorchester's greatest difficulty with Simcoe, however, would come from Simcoe's idealistic plans to make Upper Canada into a sort of colonial Utopia. Essential to all Simcoe’s schemes was control over a powerful, independent military and naval force in Upper Canada.”<sup>24</sup> John’s plans and aspirations for Upper Canada were transparent to everyone he encountered and according to men like Dorchester, these desires were overly zealous and idealistic.

John was convinced of the importance of the North American colony within the greater Empire, and he had grand ambitions for the future of the Colony to possibly even re-take portions of the ground lost to the United States:

It is in the hope of being instrumental to the Re-Union of the Empire, by sowing the Seeds of a vigorous Colony that I prefer the station I am appointed to & its fair prospects to any Post in his Majesty’s Dominions of whatever Emolument. I am persuaded that it is in the Interest of Northern America & G. Britain to be united in some mode or other, & that such an Union is neither distant nor impracticable.<sup>25</sup>

He saw the waterways of the continent as possessing great potential and believed the geographic realities of the Province to be fortuitous. In his application for the position, prior to his arrival in the space, he proposed boldly that

For the purpose of Commerce, Union, and Power, ... the Site of the Colony should be in that Great Peninsula between the Lakes Huron, Erie and Ontario, a Spot destined by Nature, sooner or later, to govern the interior World. I mean to establish a Capital in the very heart of the Country, upon the River La Tranche, which is navigable for bateaux for 150 miles—and near to where the Grand River which falls into Erie,

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<sup>23</sup> Paul David Nelson, *General Sir Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester: Soldier-Statesman of Early British Canada* (Madison; London; Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; Associated University Presses, 2000), 214.

<sup>24</sup> Nelson, *General Sir Guy Carleton*, 215.

<sup>25</sup> 16 August 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 51–53.

and others that communicate with Huron and Ontario, almost interlock.<sup>26</sup>

He credited “nature” with the positive attributes of the colony that was “destined... to govern,” but his language was full of claims that he would be the one to “establish” and he assumed that the rivers would be navigable. Indeed, he claimed that they “almost interlock,” even before he had ever set foot in the place. His assumptions and beliefs were not only that engineering these waterways was attainable, stemming from the efforts towards mastery of waterways in Europe during his lifetime, but he went so far as to claim that these projects would also be facilitated by their near geographic perfection. The very best and most advanced technologies from the European continent would connect and create the ideal colony for his Empire. Ensuring the future loyalty of Upper Canada would be fostered by engineering the landscape.

John was convinced that one of the ways he would achieve this cohesion and lofty goal was through the spread of culture. He wrote of his desire to establish a “Foundation for the Arts, Sciences, a Public Library,” so that he may “in the Literary way... be glad to lay the foundation stone of some Society that I might trust hereafter conduce to the extension of Science.”<sup>27</sup> If nature had destined the place to be a centre of power in North America, it was his actions bent toward the subjugation of nature to science and culture that would fulfill this teleological outcome. He did not include any of the Indigenous people who inhabited the land as a part of his goal to establish the kind of known or

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<sup>26</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 January 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 17–19.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



knowing population that educational institutions for which he supplicated funds would produce. Instead, John sought a population that desired the reciprocal knowledge of an imperial system in the same sense that the Empire desired to know them.

Rochefoucauld-Liancourt described his impressions of Upper Canada four years after the *Constitutional Act* divided Canada. He wrote even then that it was “a new country, or rather a country yet to be formed.”<sup>28</sup> He observed that it was this potential formation of a country that seemed to be the attraction for John to the position of Governor. John’s passion for the position was because of the colony’s lack of form, and not because of his desire to govern an already existent and defined place. Instead, all of John’s actions were bent toward the creation of something that would be based on his own imperial acts of power over space. Rochefoucauld-Liancourt’s account of John is important because it confirms that the desires John expressed during his application for the position and that were explicitly communicated in his official correspondence were front of mind and filled his conversation in person even four years into his stay in Upper Canada. The Duke was impressed that John “was fully aware of the advantages, which its native land might derive from such a colony, if it attained perfection; and imagined, that means might be found adequate to this purpose.” This was a bold vision for a largely “unknown” colonial space, and the Duke mused that

This hope was the only incitement, which could impel a man of independent fortune, and as he says, of confined wishes, to leave the large and beautiful estates he possesses in England, and to bury himself in a wilderness among bears and savages. Ambition at least appears not to have been is motive, as a man in General Simcoe’s situation is

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<sup>28</sup> La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada*, 230.

furnished with abundant means of distinguishing himself by useful activity, without removing to a great distance from his native country, where in such a case, he is almost sure of being forgotten. But whatever have been his motives, his design as been attended with consequences highly beneficial.<sup>29</sup>

Political gain or climbing ranks within the power structures of the British Empire may not have been John's aim, but his view of the vital role that Upper Canada would play in the future of the Empire was ambitious. It was his belief in the importance of exertion of power over space that he assumed his plans to engineer the territory would affect, that drove his actions.

John's zeal for the colony was not reciprocated by Henry Dundas, the man on the other end of much of his correspondence. Dundas admonished John for issuing the Proclamation in February of 1792:

With respect to the great Emigrations which may take place, either from the American States, or elsewhere, I am of the Opinion that in the very Infancy of the Province under your Government such Emigrations would not be productive of all the good consequences, which your mind on the first impression may suggest to you. Population is often the effect, but never I believe was, or will be, the cause of the prosperity of any Country. It is not (taken exclusively) found to be the true measure either of the Strength, the riches, or the happiness of a Country. I am well aware that what is true and applies in many instances, may not apply to a Country of the extent of Upper Canada; but an ingrafted [*sic*] Population, (if I may so call it), to a great extent and outrunning, (as it must do), all those regulations, laws, usages, and customs, which grow and go hand in hand with a progressive and regular Population, must I conceive in all cases be attended with a want of that regularity, and stability, which all, but particularly Colonial Governments, require.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada*, 230.

<sup>30</sup> Henry Dundas to J. G. Simcoe, Whitehall, 12 July 1792, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 178.

This disparity in viewpoint between Dundas and John over what kind of actions were necessary to exert authority over space, whether population would precede political authority or political authority the population, was an ongoing tension that existed throughout the five years that John spent in North America. It also exposes the extent to which Upper Canada was seen by many, including Dundas, not as a place to be invested in culturally or to achieve any kind of autonomy, but one that would fully retain its subjugated colonial position within the Empire.

Dundas's idea of the colony was borne out in its peripheral status to Empire that Harold Innis described in his books as well: that of an extractive political economy that supplied things like fur and other raw materials to grow and enhance the imperial core. Innis always emphasised the pervasive nature of this relationship, and specifically linked it to the waterways in the area: "It is difficult to summarize the importance of transportation as a factor in Canadian economic history [...and] the overwhelming significance of waterways and especially of the St. Lawrence. Cheap water transportation favoured the rapid exploitation of staples and dependence on more highly industrialized countries for finished products."<sup>31</sup> The value of the Canadian colonies, Innis emphasised, lay in their ability to provide wealth and resources. The mighty St. Lawrence River that offered a conduit into the interior and facilitated transportation back across the Atlantic did not necessitate its development as a strong, autonomous colony, but was seen by Dundas and others as a reason for it to remain subordinate. He did not see any reason for

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<sup>31</sup> Harold A. Innis, *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change* (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 135.

the creation or containment of a loyal imperial population or in the development of permanent resource growth like agriculture.

John Simcoe, however, strenuously objected to this secondary or merely extractive position for Upper Canada. Before his arrival in North America he supplicated for the Colony to be offered “systematic Support of it in its *Infancy*,” that he argued would “speedily enable it to maintain itself, & soon rear it up... beyond the reach of Enemies, to become the means of preserving all the transatlantic Dominions of Great Britain by exemplifying the Felicities of its Laws and Government.” This was important, he argued, because the “Reverse of such a conduct, half measures, trivial & procrastinated Assistance... may starve into a petty Factory for the accommodation of the Fur Traders.”<sup>32</sup> John’s desire for the colony—for facilitating transportation in the place—was to create a loyal population and not merely to maintain a peripheral “factory” of staples resources for the Empire. Dundas disagreed and, in his response, adjudicated instead that “regularity, and stability” were what this “Colonial Government” required before John should seek any kind of increase in population. Dundas, from his higher imperial position was wary of this desired “population” outrunning the kinds of order he wished John to assert over the province and he clearly had no intention of overinvestment in what he deemed to be a subsidiary place.

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<sup>32</sup> J.G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, London, 12 August 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 43–51.

## John Simcoe's Exploratory Journey to Lake Huron

One of the most significant periods during the Simcoes' stay in Upper Canada was during the late summer and fall of 1793. This epoch marked John and Elizabeth's most specific efforts towards establishing York and, more importantly, their mutual focus on mapping, charting, and knowing the colony. The diary of Alexander Macdonell (1762-1842) also casts light on some of the ways John and his men encountered the knowledge and presence of the Indigenous peoples in their traditional territory, especially the Anishinaabe.<sup>33</sup> In September of 1793, John Simcoe undertook a journey along what would eventually be the route of the Trent-Severn Canal for the purpose of finding a passable waterway from Lake Ontario to Lake Huron.

The many references in John's correspondence regarding his ideas of what this journey would mean for the future of the Province leading up to this point and his continual reference to it afterwards serve to point to it as a seismic moment for him.<sup>34</sup> His companion, and amateur surveyor, Captain Littlehales, wrote of a shorter trip their party undertook from York to Niagara earlier that same year in February of 1793 that upon their arrival at a place where the "Grand River" intersected with the St. Lawrence that its source was hitherto "not accurately ascertained." Littlehales' editorial comments revealed the focus and assumptions of their party, "but it is supposed to be adjoining the waters which communicate with Lake Huron. It empties itself into Lake Erie; and for fifty or

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<sup>33</sup> Alexander Macdonell, *Diary of Gov. Simcoe's Journey From Humber Bay to Matchetache Bay, 1793* (Toronto: Canadian Institute, 1890).

<sup>34</sup> La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada*, 235.

sixty miles, is as broad as the Thames at Richmond, in England.”<sup>35</sup> John keenly desired the truth of this claim, but it was not something they had verified. The knowledge that their Indigenous neighbours and guides had of the place—knowledge of which they were aware and on which they relied—was not “accurate” enough for their purposes. As Foucault might put it, they desired the production and “registration of truth.”<sup>36</sup> They were confident in their ability to “accurately” represent the Province in a way that would facilitate the kinds of power they wanted to project.

After spending over a year based in Niagara, the Simcoes made their way to York to explore and to survey the interior of the Province. On Monday, 29 July 1793, Elizabeth set out for the harbour of Toronto and she and her companions ended up embarking later than they had intended. Because of the late departure, it was dark when they arrived. “We had gone under an easy sail all night,” Elizabeth wrote, but when they arrived, those on the ship were “afraid to enter the harbour until daylight... as no person on board had ever been at Toronto.” She was relieved from her wait, “when St. John Rosseau, an Indian trader who lives near, came in a boat to pilot us.”<sup>37</sup> This is one of many references to navigation specifically, and territorial knowledge generally, that her diary revealed to be incomplete, inconsistent, and paradoxical. Both behaved as though they must already possess a kind of knowledge, yet they were simultaneously seeking to expand imperial

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<sup>35</sup> Edward Baker Littlehales, *Journal Written by Edward Baker Littlehales, 7 February 1793*, ed. Henry Scadding (Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1889), 7.

<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, eds. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S. Rose (New York: New Press, 2003), 93.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Simcoe and J. Ross Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe: Wife of the First Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada 1792-6* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 179.

governance by deepening their empirical measurements and knowledge of the colony. They were truth bearers. Their efforts towards mapping and securing the colony were bent towards an end that was undertaken elsewhere in the globe so successfully as to ensure their eventual success, and ultimately it would result in their superior knowledge of this space over any other kinds of knowledge. And yet, as entries like this one reveal, even simple attempts to travel spaces over which they had already claimed knowledge were completely dependent upon the superior knowledge of others: specifically, Indigenous people living on their traditional territories who consistently acted as their guides and mentors.

J. Ross Robertson made an editorial comment at this point in his edited edition of Elizabeth's diary, to insist that there must be a factual error in this account. He wrote that "The Governor, it seems, was not one of the passengers on this occasion, for although Mrs. Simcoe uses the word 'we,' she continues by saying that 'no person on board had ever been at Toronto.'" This was untrue, Robertson contended, for the "Governor had visited Toronto on Tuesday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May."<sup>38</sup> He had no explanation for how John ended up in Toronto soon after if he was not traveling with Elizabeth. He even laboriously elaborated the timeline that would have had to occur for John's presence to be accounted for in some entries in both Niagara and Toronto around the same time Elizabeth was there and yet to not have travelled on the same ship as she.<sup>39</sup> Here is an example of Miles Ogborn's principle of anxiety and contradiction palpable in

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<sup>38</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 179.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Robertson's work as it reflected the Simcoes' experience in Upper Canada.<sup>40</sup> Robertson felt the need to create an explanation for how John Simcoe was not on board, rather than accepting that perhaps John himself was present but lacked enough knowledge of the place enough to assist the navigation in the dark, though he had already been to Toronto. Perhaps Robertson's explanation was correct, but his anxiety in this description is evident: it necessitated that he must justify a reason for this inconsistency rather than to acknowledge John or Elizabeth's incomplete or less than total knowledge of Upper Canada, its waters and its shores.

Regardless, from the time they landed at York, Elizabeth's entries were full of intent and planning; there were a myriad of ways that she and John were to build Empire here. The first evening after her arrival, she wrote: "After dinner we went on shore to fix on a spot whereon to place the canvas houses, and we chose a rising ground, divided by a creek from the camp, which is ordered to be cleared immediately.... We went in a boat two miles to the bottom of the bay, and walked thro' a grove of oaks, where the town is intended to be built."<sup>41</sup> She claimed credit for naming the "peninsula" opposite York; "so I called the spit of land, for it is united to the mainland by a very narrow neck of ground."<sup>42</sup> During her exploration of the surroundings she was consistently aware of the inhabitants who possessed a greater knowledge of the space than she or members of her party did. "We passed some creeks and unhewn trees thrown across," she wrote, "a

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<sup>40</sup> Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 100.

<sup>41</sup> Tuesday, 30 July 1793, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 179.

<sup>42</sup> Sunday, 4 August 1793, *Ibid.*, 180.



matter of some difficulty to those unaccustomed to them. I should think it might be done with less danger of falling with moccasins on the feet.”<sup>43</sup> Even on the peninsula that she claimed to have been the first to identify as such, she wrote of it that “The air on the sands is peculiarly clear and fine. The Indians esteem this place so healthy that they come and stay here when they are ill.”<sup>44</sup> The paradoxical nature of her assertions of naming, identifying, planning, founding, and extending Empire alongside her uncomplicated descriptions of the knowledge of Indigenous people who were already there is a consistent and dissonant feature of her writing.

After her arrival in York, Elizabeth related with increasing detail the arrival and departure of any kind of communication to and from the place. This was consistent with John’s interest in facilitating communication and circulation that included the timely flow of letters, missives, and supplies as crucial for the existence and security of the colony. “Thurs. [August] 29<sup>th</sup>,” she wrote, “The gunboat arrived from Niagara. An officer from Detroit came in her, who says the Indian Commissioners returned to the States without making peace with the Indians, as they refused to give up what the Indians had invariably made the terms of accommodation.”<sup>45</sup> This was the continuation of the negotiations she had witnessed in June. Elizabeth retained a scepticism of actors from the States throughout her diary, and in this entry, she exposed her, and presumably John’s, bias towards Indigenous interests.

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<sup>43</sup> Monday, 5 August 1793, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 183.

<sup>44</sup> Wednesday, 7 August 1793, *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

Elizabeth also wrote of the ways that increasing infrastructure in the Province increased the connection and authority she and John as imperial agents had over this space. Although she had never previously claimed to have been hampered or stifled in her movement since she had arrived in York, and had generally described horse riding, boating and walking regularly, she reported that “A road for walking is now opened up three miles on each side of the camp. I can, therefore, now take some exercise without going to the peninsula.”<sup>46</sup> Four days later, Elizabeth wrote that she and John had “determined to take a lot of 200 acres on the River Don for Francis, and the law obliges persons having lots of land to build a house upon them within a year, we went today to fix upon the spot for building the house.”<sup>47</sup> This was the first of many entries around their summer home project, “Castle Frank.” What was important about this entry is its timing: prior to this point, Elizabeth had not written of any plans to build such a home. For John Simcoe, his trip to Lake Huron influenced him greatly and his interest in creating a more permanent connection with Upper Canada increased and was communicated immediately following this trip. As they returned from scouting possible sites for their structure, Elizabeth related that

Our long walk made it late before we had dined, so that, altho’ we set out immediately afterwards and walked fast, it was nearly dark before we reached the surveyor’s tent. From there we went home in a boat, as the stumps and roots of trees in the road were so troublesome to walk among in the dark. Mr. Littlehales and some gentlemen lost their way in

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<sup>46</sup> Sunday, 27 October 1793, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 200.

<sup>47</sup> Tuesday, 29 October 1793, *Ibid.*, 203.

attempting to return to the camp after us. They slept in the woods about a mile distant.<sup>48</sup>

Elizabeth did not allow that she or John were ever lost, and perhaps they never were, but that Mr. Littlehales, a man who had worked alongside the surveyors lost his way on a return journey to camp, was important to note.<sup>49</sup>

September 1793 was full of surveying and charting the colony. A Captain Aikin was busy charting the Toronto harbour and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the month she wrote that “Capt. Smith is gone to open a road, to be called Dundas Street, from the head of the lake to the River La Tranche. He has 100 men with him.” These projects culminated in John’s excursion to find a possible navigable water route from Lake Ontario to Lake Huron. On the 25<sup>th</sup> Elizabeth wrote that “The Governor set out, with four officers, a dozen soldiers and some Indians, to visit Lake Huron.”<sup>50</sup> This trip was very important to both the Simcoes. John’s correspondence included letters sent before and after this event and, significantly, Elizabeth included only one more entry of her own activities before she wrote on October 2<sup>nd</sup> that “The Governor’s horses returned from the Mississaga [*sic*] Creek, now the Holland River, from whence he sends me some seeds.”<sup>51</sup> And then there were no entries again until a month after her husband’s departure, when her diary included a lengthy entry dated 25 October in which she related details from John’s journey to and from Lake Huron. This was not only an event of great importance to her husband and his efforts, but she also wrote of it in detail. Of this trip “which was attended

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<sup>48</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 203.

<sup>49</sup> Littlehales, *Journal*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 196.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*





**Figure 11: Lieutenant Pilkington, “Sketch of a Route from York Town on Lake Ontario, to the Harbor of Penatanyasbeen on Lake Huron in Upper Canada,” (1793).<sup>54</sup>**

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<sup>54</sup> Reproduced in Brigadier General E. A. Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada* (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), Vol. 2; 1792–1794, 72.

Just before he embarked on the trip, John wrote two important letters to Dundas, one of which was marked, “Private:”

I hope that the very great importance it is of, that the temporary Establishments in this Province should give place to a more permanent system, will apologize for the particular detail which I have felt myself called upon to submit to your Consideration. The apprehension of Indian Hostilities or from the United States seems to be universal in the Province, & in that case, little is to be expected from a people who have already suffered severely for their Loyalty, & too many of whom poor and dispirited, are more apt to regret what they have lost, than to remember what they have received.<sup>55</sup>

John went on to implore Dundas to personally deliver to the King a sketch he was enclosing of the York harbour for his information and consideration of its defence.<sup>56</sup> John was anxious over the continued well-being and morale in the province and he was aware that his idea of the permanence and importance of the kinds of projects his excursion was meant to produce in the province was not met with approval by Dundas. This sentiment that he expressed in his private communique, however, he concealed from his formal letter.

The official correspondence to Dundas that John penned the same day is full of references to the importance of British naval power being present and possible on the St. Lawrence River. He discussed the proposed place for the capital—it would be named “London,” located on the body of water that he planned to rename the “Thames River” and it was equidistant from the surrounding Great Lakes—where he desired the seat of government to be established. This second letter was full of notions of security, of

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<sup>55</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, PRIVATE, York, Upper Canada, 20 September 1793, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, Vol. 2; 1792–1794: 55–56.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

enforcing the Province as a British holding, taking actions like the upcoming excursion into the lake country: “In order to induce habits of Civilization and Obedience to just Government and to cherish the Spirit of Loyalty to his Majesty, attachment to the British Nation.”<sup>57</sup> Furthering this sentiment was also a letter dated two days later in which John communicated to the Duke of Richmond that his aim was towards a “general system as seems to be most proper for [the Colony of Upper Canada’s] present security and future advantage.” To which end he had “in obedience to the general tenor of my Instructions transmitted a comprehensive report upon this important subject to Mr. Dundas, accompanied by such maps and surveys as might elucidate my opinion.”<sup>58</sup> John’s plans were informed by his current cache of “maps and surveys” but these records and representations were in his mind incomplete. Not only did he not trust the present body of cartographic records, but he also wished to actively create a new truth system that would supersede and replace all other forms of knowledge of the geography of the Province.

Elizabeth also documented this journey as if she had been a member of the party. She described in detail in an entry dated Friday, 25 October 1793, that “[t]hey rode 30 miles to the Miciaguean [*sic*] Creek, and then passed a terrible bog of liquid mud. The Indians with some difficulty pushed the canoe the Governor was in through it.” These Indigenous guides figure largely in this venture and, as in other cases, she imbued their actions both with heroism and with ineptitude. One of these, in an account where “the Governor’s canoe fell over, and the canoe passed over him. He rose up on the other side

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<sup>57</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, York, Upper Canada, 20 September 1793, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 2; 1972–1794:58.

<sup>58</sup> J. G. Simcoe to the Duke of Richmond, York (late Toronto), 23 September 1793, *Ibid.*, 66–67.

and got in again without seeming discomposure.”<sup>59</sup> And yet in another instance the entire mission was placed in jeopardy when “an Indian who carried a large cargo quitting the party, reduced the stock so much that the Governor set out with only two days’ provisions and the expectation of five days’ march to bring them to York.”<sup>60</sup> While these actors served as guides and provided necessary manpower for the journey, they were also held responsible for misfortunes the group underwent. One of these, whom Elizabeth described as “a very respectable Indian named ‘Old Sail,’ who lives on a branch of the Holland’s River... advised him to return by the eastern branch of it to avoid the swamp.”<sup>61</sup> John’s aim in this project was to find a passable waterway by which to avoid the lakes so close to American shores.

For Elizabeth, this journey marked a significant act towards attaining the “true” nature of the province, a fruition of the goals and desires towards the colony that both she and John had towards projecting power in the Province. She wrote with confidence about the distances and measurements they provided to her upon their return: “They proceeded about thirty miles across *Lac aux Claies*, now named Simcoe, in which are many islands.” Elizabeth also related that John deemed this journey a success: “Coll. Simcoe,” she wrote, “had the satisfaction of finding Matchdash Bay such as gave him reason to believe would be an excellent harbour for very large ships.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 196.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.



Duke Rochefoucauld-Liancourt even recounted his impression of the tales he had heard of this journey in his memoirs upon visiting a year after the journey. It is apparent that even at this later date that John was still excited by the possibilities he perceived from the excursion and his enthusiasm had made an impression on the Duke. He related that John believed that “A communication... may easily be opened between Lake Huron and Lake Ontario, by means of St. Joseph’s River, which by relieving the fur-traders from the trouble and expence [*sic*] of the circuitous navigation of the Detroit River, of Lake Erie, of the Niagara river, and of a great part of Lake Ontario.”<sup>63</sup> This was important because it “would disappoint the United States in their hope of receiving in future, as they have hitherto done, any articles across the lakes from the firsts, situate above Lake Huron, and would at the same time free English ships from the necessity of passing by the [American] forts of Detroit and Niagara.”<sup>64</sup>

For John, this idea of security was best realised in the sense of defence and autonomous transportation and it was foremost in his mind and was reflected explicitly in his description of the colonies needs and possibilities to his French guest. The Duke went on to explain, “Nay, he is of opinion, that a direct communication might be established between Lake Huron and St. Lawrence river, which would however require several portages, on account of the numerous rapids which interrupt the navigation of that river, as well as of the small lakes through which it flows.” Perhaps most compelling for the argument that these water-based projects were priorities of security for John is the fact

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<sup>63</sup> La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada*, 235.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

that the Duke explicitly described that John believed that this was important because “The communication between Lake Huron and Lake Ontario appears to him still more necessary in time of war, as by means of this communication he intends to convey into the latter lake the galleys, bomb-ketches and gun-boats, which he purposes to build at another town, lying on the Thames, to which he has given the name of Chatham.”<sup>65</sup>

The official account of the journey that Cruikshank included in his collected works of John’s correspondence, was recorded by Alexander Macdonell, one of the men accompanying John on an excursion through the woods of Upper Canada in the fall of 1793. His travel journal ostensibly recorded their travel and their “discovery,” but in doing so he also witnessed examples of the differences between understandings of power and sovereignty between John and these people he encountered. If we are to “read between the lines,” as Susan Hill and others who engage with decolonization approaches to histories of post-contact North America exhort, there are important aspects to note in this travel journal.<sup>66</sup> Macdonell’s account described how their party of men composed of John’s troops and surveyors were guided by “two Lake LaClaie and two Matchetache Bay Indians” who had assured them that this route was possible.<sup>67</sup> It is apparent from

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<sup>65</sup> La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada*, 235.

<sup>66</sup> Susan M. Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), 9.

<sup>67</sup> Macdonell, *Diary of Gov. Simcoe’s Journey From Humber Bay to Matchetache Bay*, 6.

Macdonell's narrative that their guides were looking for people whom they already knew, to whom they were somehow connected, along the way.

This was a network, an existent population, and a known-to-them territory that their Indigenous guides were intentionally traversing even as John and his men were simultaneously exploring and "discovering" an unknown territory. Foucault's assessment of power relationships reminds us that "not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power." For Foucault, individuals "are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation [...they] are the vehicles of power, not its points of application."<sup>68</sup> The articulation of power that Macdonell's journal described in 1793, reads much more like this Foucauldian notion of relational power than imperial ideas of sovereignty and authority that he and his compatriots would have defined.

Witgen describes ways that in the 1670s in the Great Lakes region, "Algonquin bands allied to New France fit poorly into European national categories" and he contends that this was due in part to "the flexibility of social identities" that created bonds connecting people and place. Witgen articulates a "Real and fictive kinship, established through trade, language, and intermarriage, [that] intersected and crisscrossed over a vast space."<sup>69</sup> Witgen's mapping of Indigenous peoples and territory within and nearby what would later become Upper Canada echoes Foucault's assertion that "[p]ower must be

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<sup>68</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, 1st American Edition (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 98.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Witgen, "The Rituals of Possession: Native Identity and the Invention of Empire in Seventeenth-Century Western North America," *Ethnohistory* 54, no. 4 (October 1, 2007): 646.

analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation."<sup>70</sup> John sought to interject himself and his imperial aspirations within these interactions in a manner that would extend within Indigenous ideas of power and space through his extension of a kind of European idea of sovereignty over space through cartographic projects and even as their own actions within these interactions belied the efficacy of these imperial projects. Macdonell's account of what he witnessed closely resembles the networks that Witgen asserts existed in New France a century earlier.

Alexander Macdonell's description of the interactions between John and the people who lived along the route between York and Lake Huron supports Witgen's argument for the presence of "networks of kin." To be clear, John and Macdonell's intentions towards and understandings of the place and the people who inhabited it did not acknowledge or intend to support or legitimise these kinds of power relationships. What is apparent in these imperial records of interactions between John, his men, and the Indigenous people they encountered, however, was that these networks of kin were visible in his words and they were recorded by Macdonell. This was true despite the reality that these explorations were counter to and overlaid these existing relationships in

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<sup>70</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 98.

ways that belied the power, presence, and structure of these existent and subversive networks.

There is a visible dissonance between what Macdonell wrote in his travel journal of what he, John Simcoe, and others of their party experienced and assumed and what they were witness to. This is the case also for accounts the Simcoes both related of their experiences with Indigenous people. There is a woeful lack of definition or recognition of the Indigenous people described in the records left by John or the men who accompanied him. Instead in his official correspondence they most often use the catch-all, “Six Nations” or “Seven Nations” or “Lake Indians” to identify people about whom they wrote.<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth often offered more specific identification; she variously mentioned Mississauga, Seneca, Ojibway, Mohawk, Huron, [Anishinaabe, Iroquois, Huron-Wednat, Mississauga, and Odawa] but often more generally as “Indians.”<sup>72</sup>

Macdonell identified the people who lived near where the exploratory party encamped and gathered at “Matchetache Bay” as “Messessagues” [*sic*], but also called them as “Lake LaClaie and Matchetache Bay Indians [Mississauga].”<sup>73</sup> By Macdonell’s account, John promised this group that “he would always be glad to hear of the prosperity of the Indians, and entreated them to attend their hunts, and told them that he wished for nothing more than seeing them and his children, the whites, live in harmony together, and mutually assisting each other.”<sup>74</sup> The “kin” of the Indigenous people and the “white”

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<sup>71</sup> Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789-1792: 89, 100, 102, 129, 143.

<sup>72</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 71, 95, 148, 184, 187.

<sup>73</sup> Macdonell, *Diary of Gov. Simcoe’s Journey From Humber Bay to Matchetache Bay*, 6-7.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

children of his children would interact in new kinds of kin-networks within the space John and his men were encountering. This kind of interaction from John's imperial perspective was not one that would compose sovereignty or a transfer of power, but it was one that insinuated that a kind of coexistence would be possible. This was an explicit acknowledgement that Macdonell described John making to the Indigenous people that future generations from both would live side-by-side in this space.

Macdonell also recounted a poignant encounter on the body of water John had just named "Lake Simcoe:"

as soon as the Indian in the Governor's canoe perceived [two other Indians in a canoe] he gave the death hallow; the strange Indians made for land, and we, seeing the wigwam, followed. So soon as our Indian got near enough to be heard he made a melancholy detail of the number of deaths that had lately happened among the Lake Simcoe Indians, [Mississauga] and closed his speech with saying "that the end of the world was at hand, Indians would be no more."<sup>75</sup>

The communications happening between these networks that Macdonell saw fit to include in his account of the event conveyed several things. One, that John was aware of some of the evidence of devastating illnesses making their way through the Indigenous peoples; two, that these networks were active, connective and; three, that this place was not vacant. This interaction is underscored with deep irony. On this trip John formally gave a name to a lake that had an already inhabited island. The people he encountered, Macdonell referred to as "the Lake Simcoe Indians."<sup>76</sup> The recipient of this announcement, whom Macdonell related was an "old Indian, owner of the wigwam," he

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<sup>75</sup> Macdonell, *Diary of Gov. Simcoe's Journey From Humber Bay to Matchetache Bay*, 10.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

went onto describe, “gave a similar unpleasant account of the great sickness in his neighbourhood also, and added that he expected his eldest son would soon change his climate, and that nothing but his being unwell prevented his going to his wintering ground.”<sup>77</sup> Macdonell recounted these interactions as though they were chance encounters between individuals on this route that he and John’s party were actively charting and “exploring.”

From Macdonell’s partial and skewed perspective, he still wrote of the “anticipation” and eagerness with which their guides encountered persons living in this place. Their guides were assisting in the imperial activity of creating territory and enhancing knowledge of space in a way that John and his men assumed would translate into a kind of imperial projection of sovereignty. Simultaneously, Macdonell described their guides in ways that demonstrate that they were living out their own ways of asserting power, sovereignty, and territory in the same place. John financed and provided for this journey for these guides who also accomplished their own ends.

Witgen contrasts the Indigenous kind of idea of territory and territoriality understood by the Algonquins to the ways the British had subsequently attempted to exert their sovereignty over this same space in 1670 when King Charles II (1630-1685) purported to grant to the Hudson’s Bay Company

grant unto them, and their Successors, the sole Trade and Commerce of all those Seas, Streights [*sic*], Bays, Rivers, Lakes, Creeks and Sounds, in whatsoever Latitude they shall be, that lie within the Entrance of the Streights commonly called Hudson's Streights, together with all the Lands, Countries, and Territories, upon the Coasts and Confines of the Seas, Streights, Bays, Lakes, Rivers, Creeks and Sounds, aforesaid,

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<sup>77</sup> Macdonell, *Diary of Gov. Simcoe’s Journey From Humber Bay to Matchetache Bay*, 10.

which are not now actually possessed by any of our Subjects, or by the Subjects of any other Christian Prince or State. Now know ye, That We being desirous to promote all Endeavours tending to the publick [*sic*] Good of our People, and to encourage the said Undertaking, have, of Our especial Grace, certain Knowledge, and mere Motion, given, granted, ratified and confirmed...<sup>78</sup>

Much as in the subsequent *Québec Act* and 1791 *Constitutional Act*, these vague, sweeping declarations Europeans intended to define and exert authority over space, Witgen contends, actually “underscored [their] ignorance about the interior of the continent” more than anything else.<sup>79</sup>

This intersection between John’s ideas of power stemming from an imperial core and the relational tension of other kinds of power structures that Witgen describes are written into the official imperial documents even as they were being erased in the actual geographical space. John’s use of the language of kin and intergenerational relationships with the Indigenous people insinuated that he was not unaware of the importance of these kinds of networks to the people he encountered. This does not mean that he understood the implications to his audience of what he said or that his desire for this to translate into a relationship that would connect his desires over territory to theirs was successful.

Elizabeth recorded in her diary that John’s return journey was marked with more travails. One of the members of the company hurt his foot and was obliged to stay behind with another man. That “[a] small quantity of provisions being left with them” exacerbated the supplies lost when the man carrying cargo quit their party. Misfortunes

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<sup>78</sup> *The Royal Charter, for Incorporating the Hudson’s Bay Company, Granted by His Majesty King Charles the Second, in the Twenty-Second Year of His Reign. A.D. 1670* (R. Causton and Son, Finch-Lane, Cornhill, 1816), 2.

<sup>79</sup> Witgen, *Rituals of Possession*, 642; 31 Geo. III, “The Constitutional Act, 1791.”



piled upon another, and “The Indians lost their way, and when they had provisions for one day only they knew not where they were.” Although the journey was navigated, facilitated, and enabled by the Indigenous people, it was John himself whom his wife related was the ultimate hero. “The Governor had recourse to a compass,” she described, “and at the close of the day they came on a surveyor’s line, and the next morning saw Lake Ontario.”<sup>80</sup> Not only was John’s compass the equipment that supplied the empirical, rational, imperial, and ultimately saving direction, it was the surveyor’s line, one that they had so eagerly put into place to order the colony, that was their rescuer. The “first appearance,” of Lake Ontario “Coll. Simcoe says, was the most delightful sight, at a time they were in danger of starving, and about three miles from York they breakfasted on the remaining provisions.”<sup>81</sup> This trip was the fulfillment of John’s beliefs and assertions that imperial mastery of the waterways was of utmost importance to the survival and security of the new colony and it was the acting out of his early claims that the waterways of the colony “almost interlock.”<sup>82</sup>

Stephen Hornsby’s work in *Surveyors of Empire* demonstrates the vitality and importance of European surveyors to the building of the Empire in British North America.<sup>83</sup> In Chapter Four I looked at the ways this priority was evident in John Simcoe’s desires and efforts to promote this work for Upper Canada. In this chapter my

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<sup>80</sup> Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 199.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 January 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:17–19.

<sup>83</sup> Stephen Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire: Samuel Holland, J.W.F. Des Barres, and the Making of the Atlantic Neptune* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011), 5–6.

emphasis was on how John Simcoe's consistent focus was on the waterways of the Province and how these were central to his vision for creating a loyal population in the colony. The vision he had regarding the governance of Upper Canada was to facilitate communication through the waterways of the colony for the purposes of security. The actual construction of canals in Upper Canada was based on surveys conducted after John left the Province and none of the placement of these canals was in precisely the same geographic spot he envisioned for them. However, from the time he applied for the position of Lieutenant Governor in 1789 until he returned to England in 1796, he was a tireless advocate for the necessity of engineering the inland waterways of Upper Canada for its future security and for better facilitation of the Empire's aspiration for the administration of the colony. John assumed that canals would be built as a part of his vision to create a loyal colony within the British Empire. Histories of canal projects in Upper Canada often link these efforts to the liberal Canadian State that followed shortly after their construction, rather than to John's imperial plans that predated them. This is problematic because the telos of the canals that John Simcoe envisioned when he lived in Upper Canada in the 1790s was different from the usage and role of the canals by Confederation in 1867.<sup>84</sup> The following chapter examines some of the ways that histories of the canal projects of the mid-nineteenth century have often ignored the wider context

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<sup>84</sup> Roberta McAfee Styran and Robert R. Taylor, *This Great National Object: Building the Nineteenth-Century Welland Canals* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012); James T. Angus, *A Respectable Ditch: A History of the Trent-Severn Waterway, 1833-1920* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998); John P. Heisler, *The Canals of Canada* (Ottawa: National Historic Sites Service, National and Historic Parks Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1973); A. A. den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways: The Transcontinental Railway Idea in British North America* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

behind their construction and it seeks to better position their origins within the eighteenth century and John Simcoe's imperial vision for the colony.

## Chapter Six: The Canals of Upper Canada

*Deliberate on these circumstances, and the disparity is certainly great, which loudly calls for the exertion of mental faculties, and the improvement of mechanics. Here art should assemble all her engines to supply the defect of situation; man must open the repositories of nature; mix, with chymic [sic] skill, the various ingredients, and strew them on his fields. Nature having distributed her fructifying particles in wild confusion; it is with them as with the cultivation of man, to render them productive, they must be brought into union; and this can only be accomplished by improved conveyance. In this operation, canals may be considered like the looms of the draper or hosier; or those improved machines, which, reducing the labour, yet multiply the produce; and consequently render the necessaries, and conveniences, of life more abundant by being more abundant they are obtained by every member of society, within their circulation, with greater ease; the easy means of procuring the accommodations of life increases the population of a country, and population, creating a greater demand, proceeds to further improvement. Such have been the progressive steps of civilization; and to which there appears no boundary!*

– Robert Fulton, (1796).<sup>1</sup>

Robert Fulton (1765-1815), a contemporary of John Simcoe, was not alone in his belief in the paramount role of canals for efforts to discipline geographies for the purpose of increased circulation and to facilitate and promote progress. At the end of the eighteenth century, when John Simcoe arrived in Upper Canada, the idea that canals were an ultimate answer to all kinds of security and governance problems was widespread across the globe. Canal building was a technology heralded as a revolution in transportation problems manufacturers faced in moving goods efficiently. The Canal du Midi completed by the French in 1688 was one of the first of its kind built in Europe

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Fulton, *A Treatise on the Improvement of Canal Navigation: Exhibiting the Numerous Advantages to Be Derived from Small Canals, and Boats of Two to Five Feet Wide, Containing from Two to Five Tons Burthen: With a Description of the Machinery for Facilitating Conveyance by Water through the Most Mountainous Countries* (London: Taylor, 1796), 15.

since the Roman Empire.<sup>2</sup> Its completion mastered problems posed by the geography of France and its system of over 80 locks was truly an engineering feat for its time. The problem of space and transportation was more pronounced on the North American continent where its vast space and daunting geological features created even greater challenges than those in Europe. Following the Canal du Midi, many inland waterways were carved in Europe. One of the first in Britain was the Bridgewater Canal completed in 1761. The significance of this project, according to one scholar, was “that it brought together existing technologies to form a single linear transport machine that transformed water carriage, making canals an integral element of an expanding industrial economy... especially when carrying heavy, bulky, low-value goods such as coal.”<sup>3</sup> Its completion coincided with the conquest of Québec in 1763 during the Seven Years War.

Europeans who travelled to North America and encountered its vast inland waterways had for decades marveled at the implications for expanding this kind of engineering project on both sides of the Atlantic. Even as far back as 1701, Antoine Laumet de La Mothe Cadillac, the French explorer and founder of Detroit, wrote of its place that it was

probably only a canal or a river of moderate breadth, and twenty-five leagues in length...through which the sparkling and pellucid water of Lakes Superior, Michigan, and Huron (which are so many seas of sweet water) flow and glide away gently and with a moderate current into Lake Erie, into the Ontario or Frontenac, and go at last to mingle in the river St. Lawrence with those of the ocean... Can it be thought that a land in which nature has distributed everything in so complete a manner

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<sup>2</sup> Chandra Mukerji, *Impossible Engineering: Technology and Territoriality on the Canal Du Midi* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Nevell, “Bridgewater: The Archaeology of the First Arterial Industrial Canal,” *Industrial Archaeology Review* 35, no. 1 (2013): 1.

could refuse the hand of a careful husbandman who breaks into its fertile depths, the return which is expected of it? In a word, the climate is temperate, the air is pure, during the day there is a gentle wind, and at night the sky, which is always so placid, diffuses sweet and cool influences which cause us to enjoy the benignity of tranquil sleep. If it's [*sic*] position is pleasing, it is no less important, for it opens or closes the approach to the most distant tribes which surround these vast sweet water oceans. It is only the opponents of the truth who are the enemies of this settlement, so essential to the increase of the glory of the King, to the spread of religion, and to the destruction of the throne of Baal.<sup>4</sup>

Cadillac's assessment that Detroit's place and its properties were so idyllic demonstrated the assumptions and actions of he and his European counterparts in their encounters with the St. Lawrence River and other North American waterways. The fact that he expressed these sentiments over one hundred years before ground was broken for the Welland Canal and long before even the Erie Canal (1817-1824) was built by very different actors than he, exemplifies the ways European technologies and encounters with geography informed their actions in North America. Europeans who were already enamored with the idea of engineering inland waterways saw enormous potential in the North American landscape. Not only was there a vast geography to be traversed, but the existing waterways and channels lent themselves more readily to communication systems than did the topography of Europe.

A prolific proponent for the boons of canals in North America was William Tatham (1752-1819). He was an associate of Thomas Jefferson who supplicated this president and later James Madison (1751-1836) to engage with him on various projects in

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<sup>4</sup> Antoine Laumet de La Mothe Cadillac, 1701, qtd. in Alexander Fraser, "Third Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario, 1905," in *Sessional Papers of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario: Second Session of Eleventh Legislature*, ed. Province of Ontario, Volume 38, Issue 9 (Ontario, 1906), lxviii–lxvix.

North America.<sup>5</sup> He also sought contracts in London, England to enhance that capital's "inland waterways." In 1799, he wrote a pamphlet exhorting the virtues of his plans and their suitability in all places. He quoted at length from an unnamed source who detailed the suitability of the United States specifically for these kinds of developments. Its

immense extent of sea coast ... [which] abounds with excellent bays and harbours; while the internal parts are intersected with the noblest rivers, many of which are navigable for ships of the largest burden, for some hundred of miles, up to the very doors of the planters; so that but little art or improvement is waiting by canals, to render that country the most convenient for commerce and inland navigation, of any on the face of the globe. It may with truth be said, that no part of the world is so well watered with springs, rivulets, rivers, and lakes.<sup>6</sup>

At this point Tatham interjected to correct his source, that "He should have excepted Upper Canada, Hudson's Bay, &c."<sup>7</sup> At the centre of Tatham's argument for the benefit of canals was that "They render countries, through which they pass, more rich and fertile ... There are perhaps few objects of internal policy that have so much called forth the powers and resources of a country as canals. To their cheapness of conveyance attendant on an easy and secure communication of the different parts of a country with another."<sup>8</sup> He linked the development of these "inland waterways" to "internal policy," and he was clearly aware that these projects would enhance the power of the political; for him these were not simply vessels of commerce, but they were "objects of internal policy," harnessing "powers and resources." Tatham's expressions are valuable because, like the

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<sup>5</sup> To Thomas Jefferson from William Tatham, [before 26 August 1791], Charles T. Cullen, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 22 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 79.

<sup>6</sup> William Tatham, *The Political Economy of Inland Navigation, Irrigation and Drainage, with Thoughts on the Multiplication of Commercial Resources, and on Means of Bettering the Condition of Mankind by the Construction of Canals* (London: R. Faulder, 1799), 37.

<sup>7</sup> Tatham, *Political Economy of Inland Navigation*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

quote from Fulton at the beginning of the chapter, they convey the assumptions behind what Europeans believed the engineering of canals could achieve to further the ends of progress and civilisation, but also the governance and security, of geographic space.

John Simcoe certainly lived during a time when canal building projects in Europe were many. Chandra Mukerji describes how the process and completion of the Canal du Midi project in France in the late seventeenth century had precipitated “a new kind of silent insidious power,” one that extended all across Europe by realising the engineering feat of creating access to the coast where the country had been previously landlocked, and this was a mindset that would have also influenced John and his contemporaries.<sup>9</sup> Mukerji reminds us that in France, as elsewhere in Europe, the actual archive that best describes the aspirations of this time period are the vestiges of the canal and engineering projects themselves. Rather than looking for printed or archival documents, Mukerji suggests that “while the territoriality of the early modern French state was not achieved without leaving traces in the record books, it was primarily documented in the built environment itself.”<sup>10</sup> John wrote explicitly of his desire to build sluices to connect and to govern the interior of the colony alongside his wishes to establish other governmental and cultural projects like universities and libraries for the purposes of promoting “British Customs, Manners, & Principles.”<sup>11</sup> There is a wide consensus among historians that

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<sup>9</sup> Mukerji, *Impossible Engineering*, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 315.

<sup>11</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, London, 30 June 1791, Brigadier General E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada*, Vol. 1; 1789–1793 (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), 27.



John had specific “political desires” towards the province.<sup>12</sup> His focus was consistent within the widespread European ideal that, Mukerji argues, was central for an idea of technological advancement and projections of political will through the control of waterways. She contends that

Before [a canal] could become a technical accomplishment, it had to be an object of political desire. Prior to the physicality of measuring or digging, its form was ephemeral; its existence was an act and object of political imagination and strategic calculation; and its possible success or failure was weighed more in geopolitical terms than engineering ones.<sup>13</sup>

Just as they were in Europe, canal projects in North America were an expression of the desire to govern. As A. A. den Otter contends, administrators of Ontario later in the nineteenth century, assumed that “the construction of canals ... was essential to the economic and political survival of a united Canada.”<sup>14</sup> The response that the geographic realities of the North American continent evoked from Europeans has had everything to do with their reciprocal penetration, mapping, and the subsequent conquest and sculpting of the land; most specifically this was evinced through the engineering that the Europeans desired for the waterways in Upper Canada.

While it is true that none of these canals was built before 1824, their implications for security and sovereignty run much deeper than the anxieties and priorities created by the conflict of 1812. To place these canals within their wider historical and geographical

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<sup>12</sup> Gerald M. Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years 1784-1841*, The Canadian Centenary Series (London, New York, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1963), 20–21.

<sup>13</sup> Mukerji, *Impossible Engineering*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> A. A. den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways: The Transcontinental Railway Idea in British North America* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 41.

context, it is necessary to consider people and plans from the end of the eighteenth century. Efforts to contextualise and include this time period in the historiography of Upper Canada is made more difficult because of assumptions behind the purpose of the archive that was compiled in large part at early in the twentieth century. The 1905 *Third Report of the Bureau of the Archives for the Province of Ontario* and its contemporary volume, *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 1759-1791*, are vivid examples of the ways that histories of Ontario, specifically, have been siloed and obfuscated by the manner in which sources from Upper Canada became archived.

Arthur Doughty, Dominion Archivist, wrote in his introduction to the *Documents* in 1907, that “it will henceforth be impossible to make any considerable contribution to Canadian history without drawing upon those resources.” He went on to write of the importance of publishing these more broadly, so that it might encourage “the cultivation of those studies connected with the origin and significance of our national institutions, the right comprehension of which may have an important bearing on the future stability of national life.”<sup>15</sup> His work and others include documents relevant to the surveying and territorial expansion of the Empire directly before and immediately following the *Constitutional Act, 1791*. The way the sources are compiled and presented, however, has a clear priority and emphasis that perhaps elucidates some of the reasons historians have considered these sources as significantly in their scholarship of the nineteenth century.

Alexander Fraser, Provincial Archivist of Ontario, mused in his preface to the *Third*

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<sup>15</sup> Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, eds., *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 1759-1791*, Vol. 1 (Ottawa: Printed by S. E. Dawson, Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1907), ix.

*Report* that the Bureau's efforts to publish material from Canada's past would fall into "well-defined periods" and he lists them as those "ending with 1763, 1791, 1841, 1867, 1900."<sup>16</sup> He went on to explain that "the second period [1791] includes the beginning of British trade and settlement in Upper Canada, the main feature being the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists."<sup>17</sup> The Loyalists and their influence on the Province were the content that he, as Archivist of Ontario, writing one hundred years later, assumed would be of interest to present and future Canadians. More than that, he considered this work as critical to establishing an "authentic" genealogy of the state, as reflected in his choice to open the volume with a quotation from Sir James M. Lemoine: "A nation's history lies in its archives; there alone can it be sought; there alone rests the enduring evidence of its existence—the authentic certificate of its origin."<sup>18</sup>

Fraser's insistence on identifying certain events and defining eras in Upper Canada as being precursors to the eventual Canadian state that he inhabited in 1906 is not an isolated kind of narrative; it is a refrain that echoes in other "pre-Confederation" scholarship. Histories of the canals of Ontario have been written independently through studies on three main places in Upper Canada: the Welland Canal; the Rideau Canal; and the Trent-Severn Waterway. Most of these narratives begin with the efforts towards their construction that began in earnest following the War of 1812, as scholars have long argued that this was a seismic event for the colony and that the canals emerged from it. Although historians have situated the construction of the Erie Canal further back in the

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<sup>16</sup> Fraser, "Third Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario, 1905," ix.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

past, histories of this project along with its Canadian counterparts are more significantly and particularly focussed on the immediate details and events surrounding their construction.<sup>19</sup> James Angus goes so far as to argue that “the history of the Trent-Severn Waterway resembles the history of Canada;” his point is that the various themes that have interested historians are also reasons for the opening of this canal.<sup>20</sup> He writes that prior to the first boat traversing the waterway, the dream of this possibility predated the Canadian state itself. He cites factors including the “natural channels” in the bedrock that the Indigenous people had for centuries used as a route for their canoes. “The French learned about it from the Indians and used it for exploration. The British understood its strategic importance; they surveyed it. But it was the early settlers who saw the economic significance of the natural waterway and sought ways to develop it.”<sup>21</sup> This is another way that the story of canals parallels the history of Canada: by providing a genealogy of the people who impacted its development.

Styran and Taylor’s *This Great National Object* includes an extensive amount of context and historical analysis, but it also includes only scant reference to the imperial aspects of its inception or construction. “The saga of the Welland Canals’ construction,” its opening paragraph reads,

may be said to have begun with [William] Merritt as a twenty-year-old. On a summer night in 1812 ... A thought flitted through his mind, an idea which, while pushed aside by the demands of war, would later evolve into the concept of a man-made river to connect two of the Great

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<sup>19</sup> Peter L. Bernstein, *Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> James T. Angus, *A Respectable Ditch: A History of the Trent-Severn Waterway, 1833-1920* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), xi.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Lakes, Erie and Ontario, to circumvent the spectacular, but inconvenient, Niagara Falls.<sup>22</sup>

No doubt Merritt's military assignment on the banks of the river during the conflict deeply influenced his subsequent efforts towards canal construction, but Styran and Taylor do not include other factors in their narrative surrounding the construction of the canal. Merritt was born in 1793, the same year that John's correspondence was full of descriptions of his desire and goals to create the same kind of inland waterways, in the same location the canal was eventually built. It was imperial subjects like John Simcoe whose desires and plans necessitated the construction of these inland waterways, and whose surveying efforts allowed for these canals to be engineered at all.

The more localised histories and specificities of each of the canals within Canada have also been told to varying extents.<sup>23</sup> Of these, Styran and Taylor's most specifically acknowledges the political context and implications of these projects, yet each of these books is more interested in those who constructed the canal rather than the implications these acts had in carving out the political space of Upper Canada or the important ideas that prefigured their construction.<sup>24</sup> There is other scholarship available on these engineering projects; however, many of them explicitly ignore the important questions of the place of larger notions of the political when considering the surveying and engineering projects. In *Canals of Canada* for example, Robert Legget resists all

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<sup>22</sup> Styran and Taylor, *This Great National Object*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Russ Disotell, *Brockville: The River City* (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 1997); H. J. Gayler, *Niagara's Changing Landscapes* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994); John N. Jackson, *The Welland Canals and Their Communities: Engineering, Industrial, and Urban Transformation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Styran and Taylor, *This Great National Object*.

<sup>24</sup> Styran and Taylor, *This Great National Object*, 17, 37.

impulses to consider any kind of notion of the administrative concerns behind the projects, stating with an almost palpable note of exasperation: “this is a book on canals and not one on politics!”<sup>25</sup> What has not been thoroughly considered in histories of the canals of Upper Canada is the political considerations or implications of these canals. Also missing in Canadian historiography are the mapping and cartography efforts that accompanied and preceded their engineering.

Scholars like Bruce Curtis, Alan Greer, Ian McKay, and Jeffrey McNairn are among those who have demonstrated the ways the colonial Canadian state and democracy began to form in the middling decades of the nineteenth century and how this state in formation used technologies from the education system, judiciary, and statistics to exercise rule.<sup>26</sup> Others have centred their scholarship on mid-nineteenth century transportation efforts from the first Welland Canal to the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway system that intertwined and intersected with the canals. These include Harold Innis’ *A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway* and A. A. den Otter’s *The*

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Ferguson Legget, *Canals of Canada* (Vancouver: Douglas, David and Charles, 1976), 184.

<sup>26</sup> Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840-1875* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Bruce Curtis, *Preconditions of the Canadian State: Educational Reform and the Construction of a Public in Upper Canada, 1837-1846* (Toronto: Dept. of Sociology, University of Toronto, 1981); Bruce Curtis, *Ruling by Schooling Québec: Conquest to Liberal Governmentality, a Historical Sociology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Bruce Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?: Inspection, Education, and State Formation in Canada West* (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Allan Greer and Ian Walter Radforth, *Colonial Leviathan: State formation in mid-nineteenth-century Canada* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (2000): 616–678; Cecilia Morgan, Mariana Valverde, and Lykke de la Cour, “Gender Regulation and State Formation in Nineteenth-century Canada,” in *Colonial Leviathan: State formation in mid-nineteenth-century Canada*, ed. Allan Greer and Ian Walter Radforth (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Jeffrey L. McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791-1854* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

*Philosophy of Railways: The transcontinental railway idea in British North America.*

Both of these monographs assess and identify the importance of Upper Canada's canals to the structure and governance of the colony following the War of 1812, and to the future of transportation and trans-continental communication.<sup>27</sup> None of these important works, however, focus on the imperial priorities that prefigured some of these efforts, specifically those related to surveys and canals. These projects and plans specifically enlighten what Foucault would term the discipline of territory for the extension of sovereignty and security.<sup>28</sup> Imperial priorities necessitated their engineering before the colonial state was even in its infancy.

### **John Simcoe's Legacy in Upper Canadian Canal Projects**

John's preliminary and anticipatory work on these canal projects at the end of the eighteenth century, and his assumptions of the inevitability of their construction and of their importance for the efficacy of the British imperial expansion in North America, were apparent in myriad ways. Henry Dundas and John Simcoe remained at odds over the future of the Colony throughout John's tenure, and their correspondence reveals the ways this tension affected John's actions and efficacy in Upper Canada. This was one of the main reasons that the official surveying and canal projects that were so important to John never came close to a satisfying level of fruition for him during his governorship of Upper Canada. These projects have not yet been historicised within the framework of

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<sup>27</sup> Harold Adams Innis, *A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971); A. A. den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways: The Transcontinental Railway Idea in British North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

<sup>28</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Population, Territory*, 19.

John's tenure in Upper Canada; indeed, their construction, but especially the intentions behind them, barely register in representations of the construction of the province, and what is especially absent is scholarship locating them within the body of work on governmentality and territoriality globally.<sup>29</sup>

The paucity of scholarship in this area is not for want of sources in the archive. John's desires to master, to know, and to assert imperial sovereignty in Upper Canada are evidenced in Ontario's present in the engineered waterways that traverse and penetrate its surface. The period of time in which these significant waterways were constructed, the years 1814-1854, received barely two pages in the two-volume history of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers, and were dismissed with the heading: "Forty Years of Apathy in Military Matters;" yet these projects were important both because of military priorities and for much deeper administrative concerns.<sup>30</sup> Canals and their purpose were intimately connected to priorities of security. David Blackbourn describes how engineered water projects revealed a kind of state-building exercise in Germany. The engineering projects and the redirection of water was not precipitated by and for peaceful norms. It was instead, he argues, "the by-product, even the handmaiden, of war." These projects which were similar to those of building Upper Canada's canals, were specifically directed towards the mastery of water and, according to Blackbourn, were completely dependent

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<sup>29</sup> An exception to this is J. P. D. Dunbabin, "Motives for Mapping the Great Lakes: Upper Canada, 1782-1827," *Michigan Historical Review* 31:1 (Spring 2005), 1-43.

<sup>30</sup> Armine John Kerry, W.A. McDill, and Military Engineers Association of Canada, *The History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers*, Vol. 1 (Ottawa: Military Engineers Association of Canada, 1962), 18-20.



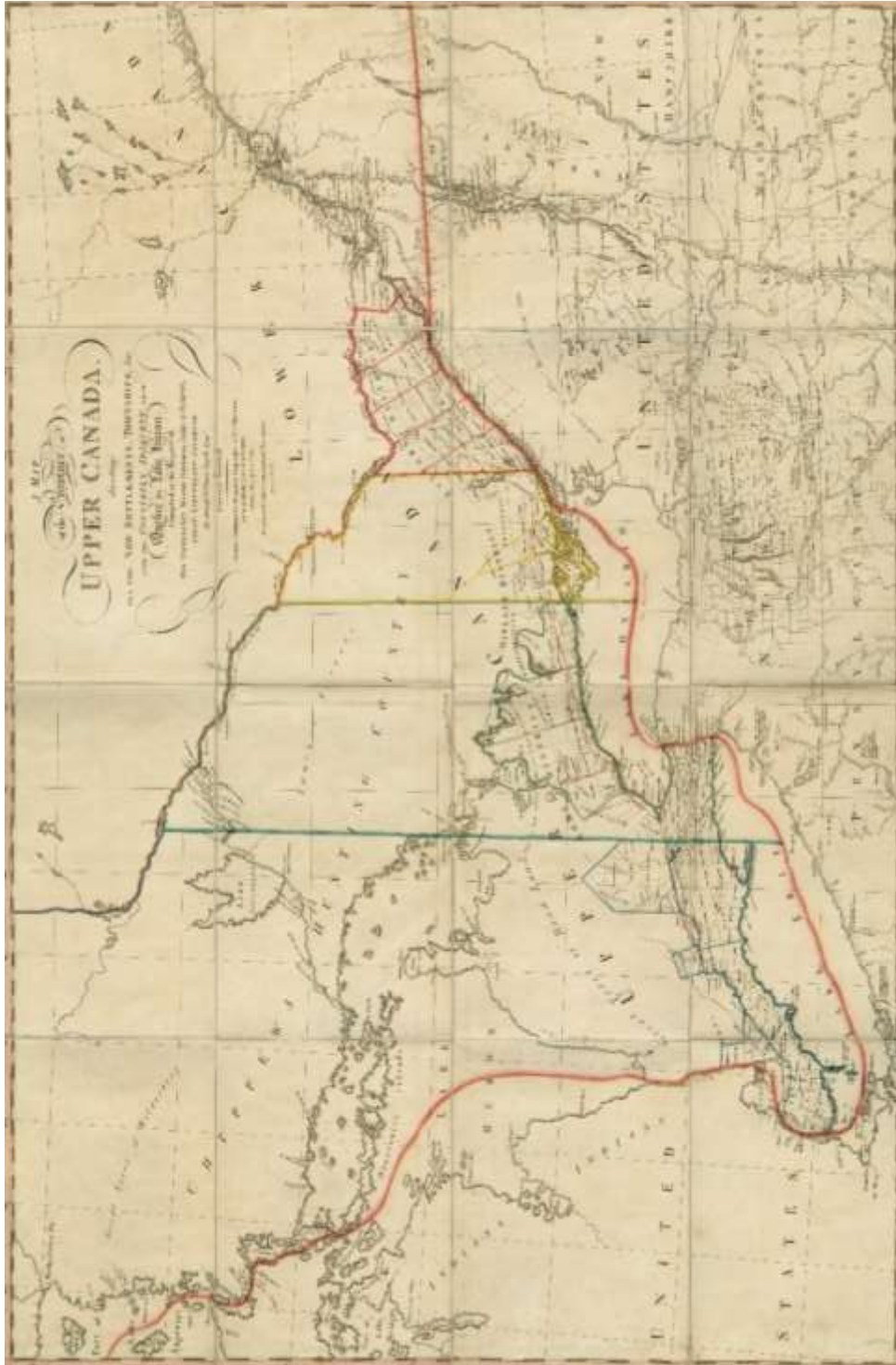
on “modern forms of knowledge” all of which were “also a measure of political power.”<sup>31</sup>

As we have seen, John Simcoe commissioned some of the first official surveys of Upper Canada and because his focus was on its waterways these were reflected in the scope and content of the many maps of the Province in the following years. In fact, many of the maps of the province published even through the 1830s were a direct result of his surveying projects or bore the imprint of this earlier work. This is the case even though most of these maps and plans were produced and disseminated years after John’s tenure in North America ended.<sup>32</sup> Figure 12 is an example of one that was printed in London in 1800 and was compiled with reference to the surveys commissioned by John in 1795. On this map there are many traces of John’s legacy especially relating to his interest in developing the waterways of the colony. There are four locations with the description: “Proposed Canal.” One of these prefigures what would become the Welland Canal, though its actual construction was south and east of the line suggested. One connects branches of the “Upper Forks” near Brantford; another would have connected Lake Ontario to the Bay of Quinte. The last thin line links the rivers flowing from Lake Simcoe South to meet up with Lake Ontario.

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<sup>31</sup> David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York, NY: Norton, 2006), 6–7.

<sup>32</sup> Smyth, *A Map of the Province of Upper Canada*, (1800).



**Figure 12:**  
**Sir David**  
**William**  
**Smith, A**  
**Map of the**  
**Province of**  
**Upper**  
**Canada,**  
**(1800).<sup>33</sup>**

<sup>33</sup> Sir David William Smyth, *A Map of the Province of Upper Canada, Describing All the New Settlements, Townships, &c.: With the Countries Adjacent, from Québec to Lake Huron*, cartographic, Scale not given (London: William Fadden, April 12, 1800), 2000931253 Item no. assigned by LAC 444.

The only line on the map reproduced as Figure 12 that would eventually become an actual canal is one that mimics the line of the southwestern end of the Rideau Canal, yet this line, around 42 Latitude and 75 Longitude, is actually labelled, “Road Opening.” Other bodies of water were noted around 41 Latitude and between 81-80 Longitude as suitable for transportation, such as “this River is navigable for load Boats almost to its Source, which is 35 miles from the Lake,” and “This River is a good Harbour for Vessels of 60 tons.”<sup>34</sup>

Figure 13 is a later map published in 1838 that includes progress made in the 1824 and 1833 constructions of the Welland Canal and gives details of more settlements. It specifies that it is “Compiled from the Original Documents in the Surveyor General's Office;” these “Original Documents” are, at least in part, the surveys John commissioned. This map credits the same “Original Documents” for its source, and it is clear that these are the same as those consulted in 1800 because of the outdated details remaining, down to the tiny “Proposed Canal” inscriptions where in 1838, other canal projects and planned projects had superseded this improbable line.<sup>35</sup> All four of these notes indicated the proposed canal lines and some of the original notations around the waterways and their

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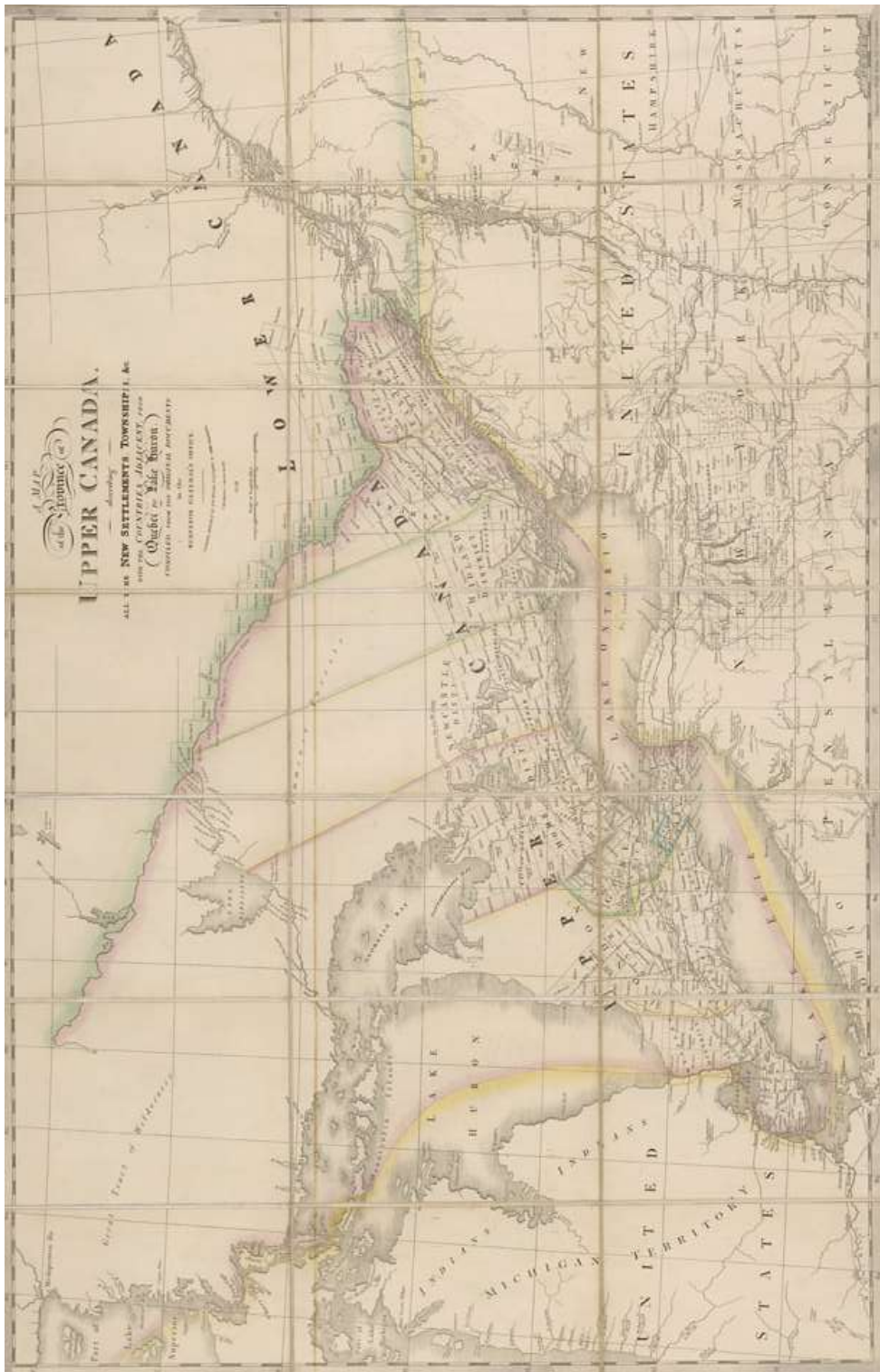
<sup>34</sup> Sir David William Smyth, *A Map of the Province of Upper Canada, Describing All the New Settlements, Townships, &c.: With the Countries Adjacent, from Québec to Lake Huron*, cartographic, Scale not given (London: William Fadden, April 12, 1800), 2000931253 Item no. assigned by LAC 444; other examples included in this chapter as Figure 12 and Figure 13: “A Map of the Province of Upper Canada Describing All the New Settlements, Townships &c with the Countries Adjacent, from Québec to Lake Huron.” Cartographic Material. London: Charing Cross East: Jas. Wyld, Geographer to His Majesty, 1838. R11981-10-9-E. Library and Archives Canada; “A Map of the Province of Upper Canada, Describing All the New Settlements, Townships, &c.: With the Countries Adjacent, from Québec to Lake Huron.” [1:1,440,000 approximately]. London: Jas. Wyld, 1854.

<sup>35</sup> “A Map of the Province of Upper Canada Describing All the New Settlements, Townships &c with the Countries Adjacent, from Québec to Lake Huron,” 1838.

possibilities were continually present in the maps published of the Province through 1858, even though their inscriptions are in places nearly obscured by the many forms of infrastructure that were actually built in these areas. An example of this map, Figure 14, was published in thirteen separate editions through 1858. Each of these reprints was in some measure based on the original surveys that David William Smith, John's appointee, undertook as the first Surveyor General of Upper Canada.<sup>36</sup>

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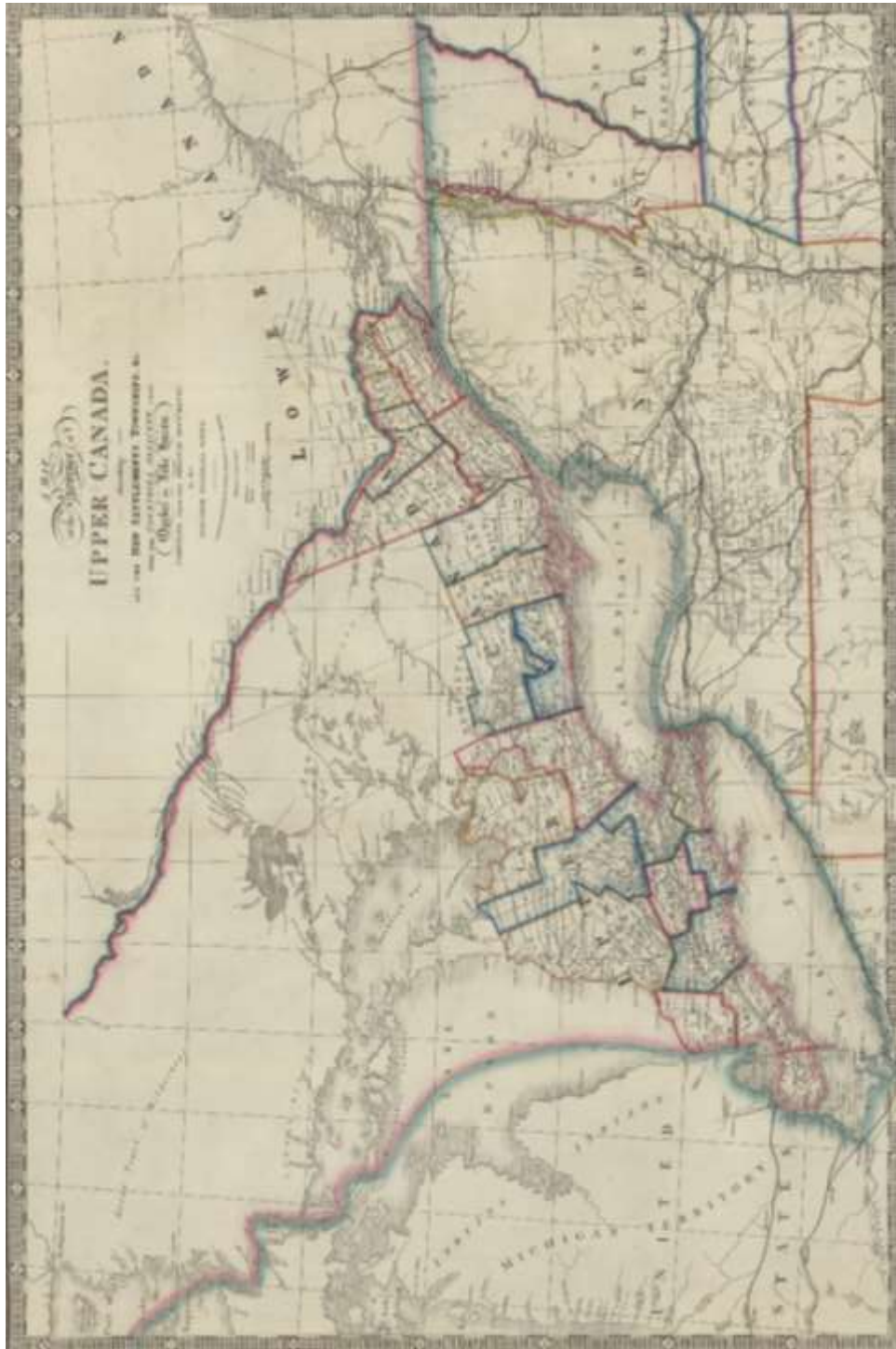
<sup>36</sup> Barbara Farrell, A. Desbarats, and Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives, eds., *Explorations in the History of Canadian Mapping* (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Map Library & Archives, 1988), 52.



**Figure 13:**  
*A Map of the  
 Province  
 of Upper  
 Canada,*  
 (1838).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> “A Map of the Province of Upper Canada Describing All the New Settlements, Townships &c with the Countries Adjacent, from Québec to Lake Huron.” Cartographic Material. London: Charing Cross East: Jas. Wyld, Geographer to His Majesty, 1838. R11981-10-9-E. Library and Archives Canada





**Figure 14:**  
*A Map of  
the  
Province of  
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<sup>38</sup> “A Map of the Province of Upper Canada, Describing All the New Settlements, Townships, &c.: With the Countries Adjacent, from Québec to Lake Huron.” [1:1,440,000 approximately]. London: Jas. Wyld, 1854

From the outset of his engagement with his role as Lieutenant Governor, John's priorities included securing the space and setting up permanent placements of troops; establishing alliances with nearby territories like Vermont and preserving those that had been negotiated with Indigenous peoples; and, famously, establishing a government of a "perfect English Constitution."<sup>39</sup> He proposed that these aims could be facilitated organically by the geography of the new province. Malcolm MacLeod asserts that "The Lieutenant-Governor's mind" was focussed on the "Lakes Ontario-Erie-Huron triangle, a space which in his dreams was filled with an interior network of roads."<sup>40</sup> MacLeod argues that John recognised the vulnerability of the waterways and believed they fostered a "weakness of too-great dependence." The geography of Upper Canada, MacLeod reminds us, was that "[e]very appurtenance of civilization—settlement, trade, even government, as well as defence—was dependent upon the bateau brigades and the lifeline of lakeships."<sup>41</sup>

While John's correspondence is full of plans for roads, and while he did ultimately oversee the beginning of the iconic Yonge Street that still structures the heart of Toronto, nearly every mention of roads in his correspondence is in the context of "Roads & Communications" which, for John, included canals or engineering of water routes. John and Elizabeth during their stay often compared their time spent travelling by land to the same distance covered by water conveyance, commenting in their

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<sup>39</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Evan Nepean, Wolford Lodge, December 3, 1789, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 7–9.

<sup>40</sup> Malcolm MacLeod, "Fortress Ontario or Forlorn Hope? Simcoe and the Defence of Upper Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* *Canadian Historical Review* 53, no. 2 (1972): 156.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

correspondence on the relative efficiency and speed of water travel.<sup>42</sup> With the exception of the times they traversed rapids, they deemed the transportation and possibilities of travel by boat as always superior. John's goal was to create greater "dependence" on the waterways through their expansion to facilitate greater circulation.

In *A Short Topographical Description of His Majesty's Province of Upper Canada, in North America*, Surveyor General Smith described the purpose of Yonge Street as a communication from "York to lake Simcoe, opened during the administration of his Excellency Major-General Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe, who having visited lake Huron...resolved on improving the communication from lake Ontario to lake Huron, by this short route, thereby avoiding the circuitous passage of lake Erie."<sup>43</sup> Smith went on to explain that once the road terminates, "from thence you descend into lake Simcoe, and having passed it there are two passages into lake Huron; the one by the river Severn, which conveys the waters of lake Simcoe into Gloucester bay; the other by a small portage, a continuation of Yonge-street, to a small lake, which also runs into Gloucester bay."<sup>44</sup> Smith's purpose for including a description of the utility of Yonge Street was with reference to its ability to connect goods to the important waterways of the Province.

In his correspondence, John described the various attributes of the Province, and for him, the waterways were a central and overwhelming feature. Their existing paths (as

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<sup>42</sup> Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:288; Tuesday, 26 June 1792, Elizabeth Simcoe, *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*, ed. Mary Quayle Innis (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 2007), 103.

<sup>43</sup> David William Smyth, *A Short Topographical Description of His Majesty's Province of Upper Canada, in North America* (London, UK: Published by W. Faden, Geographer to His Majesty, and to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, Charing-Cross, 1799), 153–54.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*



he understood them) as well as the possibilities for their improvements were an appealing argument for how best to both attract a desirable future alliance with Vermont and to secure the rest of the territory:

A]ll the waters of [Vermont] fall into the St. Lawrence, and they can from thence receive salt and rum at a much cheaper rate than from the Southern Coasts and Rivers. It is estimated that a canal might be cut from St. Johns to La Prairie... and from Lake St. Clair to Ontario would be another, to connect the navigation according to my Father's Ideas.<sup>45</sup>

John's focus on the waterways as the central feature of Upper Canada never wavered throughout his tenure as Lieutenant Governor, nor did his ardently expressed belief that the security of the colony was intimately linked to the creation and maintenance of a loyal and permanent population.

A similar intertwining of John's views on territory and population can be observed in an impassioned appeal he wrote to Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) early in 1791, beseeching him to offer his "support" and "patronage," but also twice requesting his "enlarged Ideas." Banks was a man well-travelled and even more well-connected. He had sailed to Newfoundland on the voyage with Captain Cook and John Simcoe's father. Although it is not apparent what exactly John believed Banks could accomplish for him, he was already receiving less than encouraging responses from the Home Office to his assertions that investment in the population of Canada was necessary for its future in the Empire. John appealed to Banks outlining his views on the only possible hope for the retention of the territory for the Crown:

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<sup>45</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Evan Nepean, Wolford Lodge, 3 December 1789, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789-1793: 7-9.

Though a Soldier, it is not by Arms that I hope for this Result; it is *volentes in populous* only, that such a renewal of Empire can be desirable to His Majesty ... I mean to prepare for whatever Convulsions may happen in the United States, and the Method I propose is by establishing a free, honourable British Government, and a pure Administration of its Laws, which shall hold out to the solitary Emigrant, and to the several States, advantages that the present form of Government doth not and cannot permit them to enjoy.<sup>46</sup>

It was for the security of the territory that John desired it to be populated. His greatest anxiety as a military man, and soon-to-be governor, was centred around the prospect of an unknown and uninhabited province.

One of the ways his plans for the colony were expressed in John's correspondence were through his intentions around establishing a capital. Foucault, in his lectures on *Security, Territory, Population*, articulates the historical relationship of capitals to sovereignty: "Let us say then," he argues, "that sovereignty capitalizes a territory, raising the major problem of the seat of government, whereas disciplines structures a space...and security will try to plan a milieu in terms of events or series of events... that will have to be regulated." Foucault cites the seventeenth century work *La Metropolitée*, as an example of the manner in which towns became a problem for circulation and the exercise of sovereignty because of their discrete nature. Because towns that already existed had their own ways of spatial orientation and people who lived there, these "urban functions" created "fundamental problem[s]: economic, moral, and administrative." He contends that

the political effectiveness of sovereignty [is connected to] a spatial distribution. A good sovereign, be it a collective or individual

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<sup>46</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 January 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:18. Emphasis original.

sovereign, is someone well placed within a territory, and a territory that is well politicked in terms of its obedience to the sovereign is a territory that has a good spatial layout. All of this, this idea of the political effectiveness of sovereignty, is linked to the idea of an intensity of circulations... this is both an old idea, since it is a matter of sovereignty, and a modern idea since it involves circulation—is the superimposition of the state of sovereignty, the territorial state, and the commercial state.

This idea and problem, Foucault reminds us, developed during the height of mercantilism, “that is to say, the problem of how to ensure maximum economic development through commerce within a rigid system of sovereignty.”<sup>47</sup> Foucault demonstrates how capitals were often newly built and constructed in the eighteenth century to mitigate the problems of circulation and exercising sovereignty that existing municipalities fostered. Stuart Elden takes this analysis a step further by arguing that Foucault proposed “a triangle of sovereignty—discipline—government... whose primary target is population... whose essential mechanism or technical means of operating are apparatuses of security.”<sup>48</sup> Elden exhorts scholars to continually contextualise these ideas of Foucault’s “if we wish his ideas to travel.” This is because, he argues, “Different places and different times might be closer to one node or another.”<sup>49</sup>

For his part, in 1791 in Upper Canada, John had no intention of growing any existing town or centre organically into a larger centre of governance and commerce within the colony. Instead, he wrote of his view that “It is *indispensably necessary* that a

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<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: St Martins Press, 2009), 14–15.

<sup>48</sup> Stuart Elden, “Governmentality, Calculation, Territory,” *Environ Plan D Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 3 (2007): 567.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

Capital should be established in some central situation and that as soon as possible.” The establishment of the city and its location was important, and John put a great deal of planning and thought into its features, but one of the most central of these factors was his assertion that “almost instantaneously, a great Body of Emigrants should be collected in its Vicinity so as to become the very transcript and Image of the British People, and to transfuse their manners, principles, & attachments thro’ the whole Colony.”<sup>50</sup> As early as 1791, John had fixed his sights explicitly on London, along the La Tranche River for the location of his desired capital.<sup>51</sup> Its situation along the banks of a river mirrored his ideal of the British capital, and it was linked also to his deep belief in the primary role that water transportation would hold in the future of the commerce, transportation, and security of the colony. Kingston, also situated on the water, was the largest settlement in Upper Canada when John and Elizabeth arrived in the colony, but John never suggested establishing the capital there in any of his correspondence. While I could not find any stated reason for this in his correspondence, Elizabeth described Kingston shortly after their arrival as being a, “small town of about fifty wooden houses and merchants’ storehouses... There is a small garrison here and a harbour of ships... The situation of this place is entirely flat, and incapable of being rendered defensible. Therefore, were its situation more central, it would still be unfit for the seat of government.”<sup>52</sup> John’s priority

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<sup>50</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, London, 30 June 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:27. Emphasis original.

<sup>51</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 January 1791, *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>52</sup> Sunday, 1 July 1792, Elizabeth Simcoe and John Ross Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe: Wife of the First Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada 1792-6* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 110.

for locating the capital was always focussed on the security and defensibility of the colony, and he believed that this would be best achieved through a strategic placement. It would have to be located where it was well connected for communication through water transportation and would require a defensible harbour.<sup>53</sup>

Kingston and its neighbouring community of Gananoque had traits that made their potential to become the capital seem obvious to imperial agents because of their respective positions at the eastern end of Lake Ontario where it narrows into the St. Lawrence River. (This can be seen in Figure 12, for example.) Their prime locations on the St. Lawrence were made even more prominent by their proximity also to the interior of the Province by way of the rivers Rideau and Ottawa to the north. Elizabeth wrote that at Kingston, the mouth of the river was formed in such a manner that a “harbour might be made for shipping,” and that the “river has communication a great way back with the river Rideau, and by some lakes to the Ottawa River.” However, she also made it clear that the Capital would be founded elsewhere. Writing of Kingston, despite its conducive geographic features, “These and other advantages make this one of the most eligible situations for the establishment of a town,” she wrote, “but Sir John Johnson obtained a grant of the land hereabout which prevents the probability of any such improvements being made by Government.”<sup>54</sup> John Simcoe desired a capital that was defensible and one that was settled by a loyal population. It was, however, paramount to him that both the

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<sup>53</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Alexander Grant, Québec, 1 December 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada*, 1; 1789–1793:86.

<sup>54</sup> Saturday, 30 June 1792, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 106.

population and the capital would have traits that aligned with his ideals for the future of Upper Canada. Neither of the settled populations of Kingston nor Gananoque met these criteria. Elizabeth indicated explicitly that these were not towns that John considered as possible sites for the capital.<sup>55</sup> The blank slate of the Province was full of possibilities for him, yet his beliefs in what kind of geography and what kind of population were necessary for security were at times prescriptively prohibitive. Kingston was too east and too proximal to the southern and American side of the St. Lawrence River. It was also already too settled by an imperfect population to be shaped into the most desirable kind of capital city for John's imperial ideals.

In a letter dated 7 December 1791, after he had arrived in Québec, John appealed to Henry Dundas to ameliorate an "Error of Government... in the not having the number of Executive Counsellors present to invest me in the Office of the Lt. Governor."<sup>56</sup> John was keen to begin his work in the colony, and only four individuals knew of this "Crisis" and "privity to this Power being omitted in my Instructions, nor need there be any others acquainted with it but those whom I shall find it necessary to select for the purpose & on who discretion I must in some measure depend." John went on to express that his own "Military experience" would not "permit me to wish for any Command where Commissioned & various subordinate Officers are not absolutely to obey my Orders, if the naval force on the Lakes Ontario, Erie, & Huron are not to be at my disposal, I shall

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<sup>55</sup> Saturday, 30 June 1792, Simcoe and Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 106.

<sup>56</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, Secret and Confidential, Montréal, 7 December 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793:88.

be much embarrassed in carrying into Execution a variety of civil purposes.”<sup>57</sup> John perhaps did not need to detail any further reason for this appeal, but the next paragraph indicated perhaps the crux of the matter from his perspective:

I enclose for your perusal a Letter of Sir John Johnson in consequence of one which I had addressed to him... I had heard that He conceived himself ill used in not being appointed Governor of Upper Canada & that his dissatisfaction had been *perceptible* where it ought not to have been observed... The consequence has produced every appearance of good Humour on his side... [his] interest, if he chuses [*sic*] to exert it, will be very great... & it appears to me of the utmost consequence to the future well being of the Colony that no Ill humour should appear at its outset.<sup>58</sup>

After describing his interactions with Johnson and the existing Assembly housed in Kingston, John expressed that he was “happy to have found in the Surveyor’s Office an actual Survey of the River La Tranche.” This discovery, he wrote, “answers my most sanguine Expectations & I have but little doubt that its communication with the Ontario & Erie will be found to be very practicable.” John’s interest in this geography was in its possibilities for communication and transportation, and its central location, away from American threat. He was pleased with this “communication” because of the possibility that this would form “a rout[e] which in all Respects may annihilate the political consequences of Niagara & Lake Erie.” These were not his only concern; he concluded that both “Toronto... & the Long Point...are places admirably adapted for Settlements &...form a body of most excellent Land of which no grants have hitherto been made.” The vacuous nature of these proposed sites for the capital was as important to John as

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<sup>57</sup> Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 90.

<sup>58</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, Secret and Confidential, Montréal, 7 December 1791, *Ibid.*, 90-91. Emphasis original.

was their physical geography. John indicated that he planned to “assemble the Legislature in the Autumn at Niagara,” and to spend the winter in Kingston, by “early in the ensuing spring,” he proposed, “to occupy such a central position as shall be previously chose for the Capital.”<sup>59</sup>

John Simcoe’s official correspondence, both before and during his tenure was filled with references to his plans for the possibility of London as the seat of government. Elizabeth wrote on Saturday, 21 July 1792, “It is in the Interest of the People here to have [Kingston] considered as the Seat of Gov. Therefore they all dissuade the Gov. from going to Niagara & represent the want of Provisions, Houses etc. at that place, as well as the certainty of having the Ague. However he has determined to Sail for Niagara tomorrow.”<sup>60</sup> Richard Cartwright (1759-1815), a resident of Kingston, wrote to Isaac Tod in 1792 of John Simcoe’s plans, “The River Trancke [*sic*] is still talked of as the seat of government, but I hope this plan will not be persisted in, for it appears to me as complete a piece of political Quixotism as I recollect to have met with, and will be going out of the way of the inhabited part of the country, instead of coming to govern it.” His arguments against establishing a new capital along the La Tranche River were the exact reasons John desired it. They both appealed to the mandates of nature to support their positions. Where John saw the transportation and security possibilities of a location like London, Cartwright insisted instead that

The maxim to follow nature not to face it is as proper for our guide in politics as in all other concerns; and however splendid the project may

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<sup>59</sup> J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, Secret and Confidential, Montréal, 7 December 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793: 90-91

<sup>60</sup> Simcoe and Innis, *Mrs. Simcoe’s Diary*, 105.



be of establishing a capital that shall give laws to a numerous population which is to cover the immense peninsula formed by the lakes, and the Ottawa and St. Lawrence rivers, it is a scheme perfectly utopian, to which nature has opposed invincible obstacles; unless Mongolfier's ingenious invention could be adapted to practical purposes, and air balloons be converted into vehicles of commerce.<sup>61</sup>

Both of these men were convinced that natural geographic realities and, importantly, that the communication facilitated or prohibited by these, were of utmost importance. Where Simcoe saw the possibility and destinies of nature of Upper Canada, conquered by engineered waterways, Cartwright derided John's "perfectly utopian" scheme and even suggested that hot air balloons were as likely a source of communication and transportation for that proposed site as any other possibility. "The farther we go," he continued, "the more powerfully must these causes [of expense of transport] operate; and when we go beyond the banks of Lake Ontario, it will cost as much to bring our rude produce to market, as it will be worth, and yet from such exports alone it is that we can become beneficial to the mother country, who certainly can have no intention to make us manufacturers." Cartwright observed keenly that the state of the economy of Upper Canada remained largely extractive. He had no faith in John or the Empire to foster a settler society. He thus viewed with suspicion John's plans to relocate the capital:

had the Governor fixed his residence at this end of Lake Ontario, between which and the Point of Bodet, [where] lies the greatest mass of our population, its influence, co-operating with the comparative advantages of the situation, would have had a powerful, beneficial, and lasting effect. And much chagrin would have been spared to the inhabitants ... who cannot be pleased to find that they are to be neglected, and let to themselves, while Government is pursuing, at a

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<sup>61</sup> C. E. Cartwright, ed., *Life and Letters of the Late Hon. Richard Cartwright, Member of Legislative Council in the First Parliament of Upper Canada* (Toronto: Bedford Brothers, 1876), 50–51.

very great expense, imaginary advantages.<sup>62</sup>

Cartwright did not explicitly mention canals; instead he derided the impracticability of locating the capital in a new site that was not already central to the existing population and directly located along the already known and traversed shores of Lake Ontario. By contrast, John described the future potential of the Province and its waterways in such a manner that assumed that any of these rivers could be connected with canals. Not only this, but he also believed that these canals were inevitable and that their course and possibility was in direct response to the designs of nature.

This kind of perspective regarding the viability and inevitability of mastering nature for the purpose of governing is one that locates John squarely within a long tradition of European ideas of transportation, and it is another way that his priorities and ideals for the colony were at odds with those with more local interests and connections. John's assumptions around the viability and inevitability of canals were deeply rooted in imperial and European ideas of science and geography; his aims and ambitions for the Province demonstrate this governance-by-distance sensibility. Mapping, surveying, and transportation projects were often linked actions undertaken by European empire builders. Some of these projects took place just after the French and English arrived in the late fifteenth century, but many of these endeavours to know and to extend authority in this space were undertaken over the next two centuries and they were often concurrent with technological advancements and governmental restructuring that occurred in the "Old World."

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<sup>62</sup> Cartwright, *Life and Letters of the Late Hon. Richard Cartwright*, 50-51.

Scholars of Atlantic History are interested in the ways that encounters with North American geography and people rippled across the ocean and impacted ways of knowing and being in Europe as well.<sup>63</sup> As I contend in Chapter Four, developments of surveying technologies did not extend neatly from European centres to North American peripheries. Similarly, modern states in North America did not follow sequentially upon the heels of imperial structures. Elizabeth Mancke assesses the development of governing structures in North America specifically, and she concludes that Empires and nations were developing simultaneously rather than one extending from the other. “In short,” she writes, “Empire-building and state formation seem to be parallel more than interdependent phenomena, related coincidentally rather than consequentially.”<sup>64</sup> Dennis Meinig agrees that rather than being distinct forms of governance, “imperialism begets nationalism; cadres trained in the tools of Empire turn them into the dismemberment of the Empire.”<sup>65</sup> Empires did not lead neatly to nation-states, and yet the imperial centre of colonies like Upper Canada was at its core the burgeoning modern British liberal state and led into the Canadian liberal governmentality .

Where did the threads of governance—things like Constitutions and decrees but also political technologies such as maps and canals—where did these bind places like Upper Canada more closely to the Empire and create deep structures and patterns of

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<sup>63</sup> Alison Games, “Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities,” *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 741–757; 741.

<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Mancke, “Empire and State,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, eds. David Armitage and M. J. Braddick (Houndmills, U.K.; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 195.

<sup>65</sup> Donald William Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, Vol. 1, Atlantic America, 1492-1800 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 374.

colonial dependence that lent themselves to the forms and patterns that historians like Harold Innis identified over a century later?<sup>66</sup> Where instead did these acts towards governance fray and knot and allow for greater colonial independence and perhaps lead to the building of the Canadian National Railway and the continental expansion of Confederation?

A. A. den Otter identifies the revolutionary concepts that were a part and parcel of the scientific and industrial revolutions in Europe: “liberalism eroded the old mercantilist Empire, replacing it with looser and informal bonds better suited to Britain’s modern technological society. By redefining concepts of Empire, liberalism established a new relationship between the imperial metropolis and its colonial hinterland.”<sup>67</sup> What den Otter does not address in his book, *The Philosophy of Railroads*, is when in British North America this shift occurred. His argument for the transformation from one to the other and his pithy analysis of the ways that the development of the railways in Canada paralleled and were concurrent with the development of the Canadian state is compelling. More problematic, however, are the ways that his central focus on the railways sidelines the canal building projects that preceded them. While den Otter is correct to connect these two in their effects and purposes, particularly in their connection to communications and this function in state-building, he conflates their construction with the institution of an independent Canada rather than acknowledging the ways imperial actors assumed that canals would be built in these places. These were actors whose

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<sup>66</sup> Harold A. Innis, *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 124.

<sup>67</sup> den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways*, 15.

ostensible aims were to uphold and expand their various European Empires.<sup>68</sup>

What I have sought to demonstrate is that the technology that canals in Europe embodied specifically fostered and abetted imperial priorities. Agents like John Simcoe assumed that they would continue to do the same in North America. William Tatham waxed eloquently on the benefits of canals specifically to those who desired to govern:

Good roads, canals, and navigable rivers, by diminishing the expense of carriage, put the remote parts of a country more upon a level with those in the neighbourhood of large towns; they are, on that account, THE GREATEST OF ALL IMPROVEMENTS. They encourage the cultivation of the remote parts, which must be much the greatest circle of a country; and thereby the rents or profits are improved. All canals may be considered as so many roads of a certain kind, on which one horse will draw as much as thirty horses usually do on the ordinary turnpike roads.<sup>69</sup>

Tatham's words read as a sales pitch presented to those in powerful positions; indeed, his intended audience was those interested specifically in colonising space. He was addressing those who desired to establish governance and population, rather than merely merchants or investors. North America, he opined, was already in such a state that "little art or improvement" would be necessary to fulfill the potential latent in its natural landscape and resources. Tatham saw canals as a universal good; they were equally beneficial to the harbours of London as they would be to the existing waterways in North America. In his opinion, canals were the future; they were a technology that would provide "the greatest of all improvements." Tatham's pamphlet reflects the same belief in the primacy of the technology of canals as the sentiments that John Simcoe expressed in

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<sup>68</sup> den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways*, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Tatham, *Political Economy of Inland Navigation*, 37. Emphasis original.

his correspondence where he promoted the development of the inland waterways of Upper Canada. John desired Upper Canada to be a colonial masterpiece in the British Empire, and central to this goal was a well-disciplined and interconnected Capital with clear lines of communication fostered through engineered waterways.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> J.G. Simcoe to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 January 1791, Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 1; 1789–1793, 17-19; Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 19.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This dissertation has been an effort towards a kind of historiographical “interruption.”<sup>1</sup> My goal has been to expose how Europeans—specifically British imperial agents at the end of the eighteenth century—encountered the space they christened, “Upper Canada,” and the assumptions they made about exerting power there. My central goal has been to identify and contextualise the many ways in which John and Elizabeth Simcoe both actively participated in and upheld an imperial network. John did this through his surveying projects and his advocacy for the development of the waterways within Upper Canada. Elizabeth manifested this through her documentation of John’s and her efforts towards civilisation and through her sketches, watercolours, and her meticulous cataloguing and registration of all that she encountered. In the previous chapters I have examined ways that they consistently encountered the things and people of the colony through the prism of empire. I have considered both Simcoes’ ideas and actions during their tenure in Upper Canada within Michel Foucault’s theories of governmentality, discipline, and security. I argue that their efforts in these areas explicitly supported and contributed to imperial structures and networks of power and ways of knowing. There was a concept and expression of security that was dictated by and for imperial purposes, and it was centered within the context of a wider Atlantic world. The second component of my argument is that both Simcoes were focussed on efforts to accurately survey, map, to govern, and ultimately to engineer and alter the waterways of

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<sup>1</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 344.

the Province. Foucault identifies that the discipline of territory, in order to foster better circulation of power through space, is central to notions of governance. John Simcoe desired, prefigured, and precipitated the discipline of the geography surrounding the St. Lawrence River through his vision for canals during his tenure as Lieutenant Governor.<sup>2</sup>

Each of the chapters of this dissertation approached these central arguments in different but complementary ways. Chapter Two examined the centrality of existing waterways for the formation of the Province of Upper Canada. Both through the methods by which water was known and mapped, and because it was not clearly traced or understood, it dominated the debate and shaped the course of the inception and creation of the Province itself. Fluvial lines translated well into extensions of power for the British because of their strong navy. The incomplete, localised, and partial knowledge the agents in the British Home Office had of this geography directly impacted their process of appointing Upper Canada's first Lieutenant Governor. Their tenuous and vacuous understanding of the space underscored their desire to have an imperially well-connected man like John Simcoe appointed to this position. In Chapter Three I contended that it was both John and Elizabeth's interconnectivity within imperial networks that informed their beliefs and priorities during their stay in Upper Canada. Elizabeth's words expressed assumptions and desires regarding the geography and people in ways that illuminate John's priorities as well. Her consistent focus was on cataloguing and administering—both characteristic examples of the manner in which Europeans exerted power in colonial

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<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: St Martins Press, 2009), 19.



space. She was relentlessly engaged in what Foucault would term the “interrogation... and registration of truth.”<sup>3</sup> I argue that both Simcoes’ actions are best understood in the context of their position as imperial agents first and foremost, and their common goal in all their efforts was to deepen the colony’s ties to the British Empire. Chapter Four contextualised the surveying and mapping efforts that John undertook and sought to complete in Upper Canada within the field of governmentality and cartography. It also located these projects within the wider historical context of British surveying and mapping elsewhere that preceded John’s appointment. I argue that these technologies were developed and enhanced through a reciprocal relationship between periphery and core rather than extending directly from Europe to North America. John Simcoe was among those who believed that to best govern and extend imperial power over the distant colonies it was necessary to apply technologies of surveying and through these efforts, create accurate depictions of space. Chapter Five linked John’s desires to survey the Province to his priorities to also create and foster a loyal population within it. His plans for the colony, his vision for its development, and his actions that were focussed on the administration of the colony, its security, and the creation of a population outran his mandate and sphere of influence. One of the reasons these plans never came to fruition was that his ideas and goals for the Province of Upper Canada were anachronistic within the Empire itself. Finally, Chapter Six connected John’s vision for engineering the waterways of Upper Canada to the subsequent canal projects that were built in the mid-

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<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 93.

nineteenth century. John was a product of the eighteenth century and his desire to discipline the geography for the purpose of governance was to deepen the imperial connection to and authority over the colony rather than developing autonomous precursors to the Canadian State that emerged in the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Assessing the Simcoes' actions and positions, their methods of making change, and the ways they encountered the space and people they encountered in Upper Canada must be informed by the context of their intimate relationship to the British Empire. This has implications for the ways that we view their actions and legacies in Canadian historiography. There are examples of scholars who have begun this important work for Canada, but there is more work to be done.<sup>5</sup> Upper Canada, specifically, has a paucity of work that interrogates the deep influence of its imperial past on its present "culture" to the same extent that this has been done around the world.<sup>6</sup> As Edward Said exhorts us,

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<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Population, Territory*, 19.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Buckner, ed., *Canada and the End of Empire* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004); Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid, eds., *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History* (Toronto; Buffalo; Fredericton: University of Toronto Press; Acadiensis Press, 1994); Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002); Stephen Hornsby, *Surveyors of Empire: Samuel Holland, J.W.F. Des Barres, and the Making of the Atlantic Neptune* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011); Stephen Hornsby and Michael Hermann, *British Atlantic, American Frontier: Spaces of Power in Early Modern British America* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005); Jeffers Lennox, "An Empire on Paper: The Founding of Halifax and Conceptions of Imperial Space, 1744–55," *The Canadian Historical Review* 88, no. 3 (2007): 373–412; Jeffers Lennox, *Homelands and Empires - Indigenous Spaces, Imperial Fictions, and Competition for Territory in Northeastern North America, 1690-1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); Sheila McManus, *Line Which Separates: Race, Gender, and the Making of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands*, *Race and Ethnicity in the American West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Antoinette M. Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 2000); Frantz Fanon et al., *The wretched of the earth*, 2017; Edward W. Said,

cultures do not begin and end with national boundaries, nor does cultural influence run only one way even when there is a powerful imperial relationship with a peripheral colony. He contends that “we have never been as aware as we now are of how oddly hybrid historical and cultural experiences are, of how they partake of many often contradictory experiences and domains, cross national boundaries, defy the police action of simple dogma and loud patriotism.”<sup>7</sup> He argues that it is not simply that cultures influence each other in such a way that one culture adopts traits of another, but rather that culture is also created through the interaction.

Said asserts that imperialism, “lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices.”<sup>8</sup> Upper Canada at its creation in 1791 was a product of the eighteenth century, rather than a pre-cursor to the liberalism that would emerge in the nineteenth century, and this dissertation has sought to place John and Elizabeth Simcoe firmly within this context. My focus has been to read their thoughts, actions, and influence on the cartographic projects and, subsequently, on the canals of Upper Canada, through a postcolonial lens and with their imperial priorities specifically in mind. The influx of United Empire Loyalists into Upper Canada at the end of the Revolutionary War has dominated early Upper Canadian historiography. Perhaps because of this, the imperial nature of the

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*Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Ann Laura Stoler, “Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 1 (1989): 134–61.

<sup>7</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 15.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

priorities of the Simcoes who were deeply influential in the development of the Province has been minimised. This is not because of a lack of sources or a want of excellent examples of scholarship in other Canadian historical spaces that shows how exposing imperial priorities may be done.<sup>9</sup>

For example, Adele Perry's book on the Douglas family in British Columbia exposes the gendered nature and subjectivity of the archive of "Canadian History."<sup>10</sup> Similar to her efforts, my goal in this dissertation has been to read against and with the grain of the sources generated by the Simcoes and their contemporaries. Even more important to my archival corpus than their words left on paper, and influential as a catalyst for this topic itself, are the upper waters of the St. Lawrence River that still traverse the landscape of the Province. This waterway includes the canal projects that have long since been completed and (with the exception of the Welland Canal) in some ways abandoned or relegated to becoming leisure space. The geographic artifacts of the province are an "archive" reposed in the physical earth itself. The St. Lawrence River maintains its centrality for people in present day Ontario even as it did for imperialists like Elizabeth and John Simcoe when they arrived on its shores in 1791.

Identifying motivations behind the engineering projects that remain carved into the landscape of Upper Canada is an important component of writing a history of the

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<sup>9</sup> Daniel W. Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999); Harris, *Making Native Space*, McManus, *Line Which Separates*; Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*; Ann Laura Stoler, *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 3.

present. These acts were performed for the purpose of exerting power and sovereignty and with the hope of creating populations and courting their loyalty. As I have argued in the previous chapters, both cartographic efforts and projects to engineer the waterways of the Province betray assumptions behind definitions of power and knowledge and how these interrelate; they were prefigured by imperial agents and for the purposes of empire.<sup>11</sup>

The ideas of power and sovereignty that John Simcoe desired for the waterways of the colony were vastly different from those already present in the geography that the British named, “Upper Canada.” Georges Sioui explains that “[f]or the Amerindian, life is circular and the circle generates the energy of beings. Life is merely a great chain of relationships among beings. Humans acquire power only to the degree that they can channel and circulate energy (material and spiritual possessions).”<sup>12</sup> Susan Hill expands by arguing that the relationship of people to the land is the only way to increase historical knowledge: “A human lifespan is extremely limited, not to mention self-centered, but other parts of the natural world provide a better guide and a better perspective towards examining the past.”<sup>13</sup> The Simcoes’ actions towards the geography of Upper Canada certainly did not reflect this kind of notion. As I have argued here, it is important that we interrogate the intersection of these differences in order to best recognise and address

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<sup>11</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 93.

<sup>12</sup> Georges E. Sioui, *For an Amerindian Autohistory: An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 12.

<sup>13</sup> Susan M. Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), 3.

some of our contemporary struggles and reconcile with our legacy of colonialism.<sup>14</sup> To fail to do so enables these insidious imperial acts to become normalised as inevitable first steps to a history of Canadian state formation and nation building.

While I have not included much analysis in the previous chapters of the experiences of Indigenous people who were present or the ways that the Simcoes' actions immediately impacted them, it is not my intent to sideline or to relegate Indigenous people simply to the past. Taiaiake Alfred cautions against the kinds of histories that serve to locate "Indigenous people in the past as 'noble yet doomed' relics of an earlier age."

This, he contends

allows the colonial state to maintain its own legitimacy by preventing the fact of contemporary Indigenous peoples' nationhood to intrude on its own mythology. Native people imperil themselves by accepting formulations of their own identities and rights that prevent them from transcending the past. The state relegates Indigenous peoples' rights to the past, and constrains the development of their societies by allowing only those activities that support its own necessary illusion: that Indigenous peoples today do not present a serious challenge to its legitimacy. Thus, the state celebrates paint and feathers and Indian dancing, because they reinforce the image of doomed nobility that justified the pretense of European sovereignty on Turtle Island... State sovereignty depends on the fabrication of falsehoods that exclude the Indigenous voice.<sup>15</sup>

Alfred calls us neither to go back to the past nor to focus only on the present. Instead, he invites us to fully enter what he terms a "condolence ceremony" to enable a true experience of acknowledging the weight of the past and imbuing the future with hope.

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel Coleman, "Grappling with Respect: Copway and Traill in a Conversation That Never Took Place," *English Studies in Canada* 39, no. 2/3 (2013): 63–88.

<sup>15</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 83.

Alfred's work *Peace, Power, and Righteousness* is in the form of a condolence ceremony, one that "pacifies the minds and emboldens the hearts of mourners by transforming loss into strength" and moves the participants towards healing, "fends off destruction and restores hearts and minds." But, importantly for Alfred's thesis, it is a process that moves toward the future by infusing new leaders with ancient wisdom and giving them reasons for new hope.<sup>16</sup>

My hope is that in explicitly exposing the imperial motives and intent of some of the people present in the early years of Upper Canada, the impact of their actions may be better considered for their legacy and implications. The events of the nineteenth century that followed the War of 1812 and led to the governmental shift and projects prior to the *British North America Act* of 1867, were without question central components of this shift. But the deep imperial structures and heritage that formed and shaped Upper Canada in its infancy should not be minimised or passed over. These years, from 1791 to 1796, were formative for the Province, and there are ways that imperial priorities sidelined and sublimated more local desires and ambitions. These imperial vestiges in Canada's past—not only with reference to their considerable impact on Indigenous people—should not be underestimated or ignored. Canada's imperial past is a deep component of its present, and the ways this continues to inform Canada's relationship to Indigenous people and to its geography is significant.<sup>17</sup> In her reflection on the legacy of Harold Innis, Judy Berland

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<sup>16</sup> Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Susan M. Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017); Leanne Betasamosake

articulates it this way: “colonial space is the product, not the predecessor, of colonizing practices. In other words, colonial space is not simply acquired. In the course of being ‘mastered’ it is produced: its usable topographies are shaped, in dialectical interaction with its own resources, to serve the requirements of Empire.”<sup>18</sup>

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Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishers, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> Jody Berland, “Space at the Margins: Critical Theory and Colonial Space after Innis,” in *Harold Innis in the New Century: Reflections and Refractions*, ed. William Buxton and Charles Acland (Montréal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 288.



## Postscript

“*Why do we attend to that to which we attend?*” James Ten Broeke, one of the greatest influencers on Harold Innis regularly admonished his students to query their own inquiries.<sup>19</sup> Innis’ work on geographical influences on Canada’s past and what he termed the *Bias of Communication* was deeply influenced by this advice and his often-penetrating analysis on his own civilisation was deepened in the process. This question echoes for me in my research, and it is a refrain to which I return as I reconsider the reasons and scope of the questions that I have raised in this project. I was born and raised in the United States, and I lived within 100 miles of the Canadian border in the Rocky Mountains in Montana from the time I was seven. Despite my close proximity to the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, my first entry into Canada was not until I was 20 years old. When I was 22 I enrolled in a Canadian university for a variety of reasons, but my decision was prosaically most heavily influenced by the position of the Canadian dollar to the American at the time. It was September 2001 when my classes began. One week later, I was awakened by a 6 a.m. phone call from my mom in Montana: “turn on your TV,” she said. I turned on the television just after the second airplane hit the World Trade Center in New York. Beside me, in the shared lounge space of the dorm, was a woman from the United Arab Emirates. Her visible and vocal reactions to the sights projected on that screen were mystifying to me and caused me pause. She was both delighted and triumphant; she expressed vindication for past wrongs in her neighbouring home region

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<sup>19</sup> Judith Stamps, “Innis in the Canadian Dialectical Tradition,” in *Harold Innis in the New Century: Reflections and Refractions*, ed. William Buxton and Charles Acland (Montréal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), 57.

and in her belief that imperialist actions must always be repaid by acts of reprisal. Her reaction was not one that I perceived in any other people in the weeks and months that followed, but the uncensored, genuine response that she felt and expressed in that moment was so incredibly different from any I anticipated, that it precipitated in me deep reflection.

The ways this event was understood and perceived north of the border around me had a disruptive impact on my perspective on the past, its representations, and assumptions about the world and my future in it. This manifested in many ways, most of which I did not understand until later. What was immediately apparent to me was that while I was (for the most part) surrounded by people who were compassionate towards the pain Americans were facing, Canadians seemed to grasp something about the “why” that I, as an American, could not. In retrospect, this was my first glimpse of the perimeters of a totalizing space I had blindly inhabited. I began to realise, slowly, how little I understood about the wider world and how the view from “outside” was so different from the view, the perspective on the world that existed even then, a mere 15 kilometers to the south where Washington State began. I spent weekends with a friend who lived close to my campus at her family home in Langley, BC on Zero Avenue, a street that literally forms the border with the United States. This unassuming road appears the same as every other road in the neighbourhood; there is not even a fence of any kind, there are simply miniature obelisks placed sporadically along the road with weather-worn engravings denoting it to be an international boundary. The stark difference in assumptions about the events that took place on 11 September 2001 between those who lived to the north of this

simple road and those who lived to the south served to underline for me the understated reality of the geographic designation. This contrast precipitated a significant change in focus for me.

By 2005, I spent a semester in Ottawa interning with a Parliamentarian and during that fall, I realised I had fallen in love with this perspective, this externality. I changed my major from a degree in Business to International Studies, focussing on definitions of security in international relations, specifically as it related to the concept of human security. This topic was one that to me helped reframe and explain the differences between the troubling conversation around “security” in the United States and the ways I was learning that Canada had approached similar challenges in its past and on an international level. By the time I completed my honours thesis for my undergraduate degree I realised that my approach to these concepts and issues was best informed by the use of historical theoretical methods rather than classical political science. For me, the combination of my experience with the geographical realities of borders and their impressions on ways of knowing and being in space and the ways that I have witnessed a shift in language and interaction with the concept of security on both sides of the border in my short lifetime has significantly impacted my attention to the kinds of queries that have informed this project. “Why do we attend to that to which we attend?” When I see Canada past and present, I will always see it as “other” to my early life experience and education within the United States and its totalising approach to representations of its past. For me, the concept of a journey towards autonomy and independence that does not have to include a bloody conflict to explain its existence is antithetical and mystifying to

my American mind. It has been a welcome antidote to the angst I have experienced in inhabiting a world that accepts and embraces the possibility and inevitability of violent revolt.

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